

H2O Just Add Water: New Generation

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Summary: Many Years after the graduation of the four girls they have daughters but when they are left orphaned, the "One That Got Away" Charlotte Watsford must try and redeem herself and become a guide for the girls as they grow to become the new generation.

1. Chapter 1

Prologue: Many years after Cleo, Rikki, Emma and Bella graduate High School the girls still have their mermaid powers; even after finding their soul mates, getting married and settling down they all still carry the power with them. Around the same year they each have a child, a daughter; Cleo and Lewis named theirs Kayla, Rikki and Zane named theirs Roxie, Bella and Will named their Becka (short of Rebecca) and finally Emma named hers Elayne.

However tragedy struck when the children were only a year old, the parents were all at a reunion party together, the first time they had all seen each other (along with a few other old friends) in over a year, and they were all killed.

Becka was left in the custody of the same person who had been taking care of her the night it happened, Sophie Benjamin.

Kayla was left in the custody of Cleo's parents and her sister Kim.

Elayne also had been left in the custody of the very same person who had her the night it happened, Emma's younger, yet highly mature and responsible brother, Eliot.

The fourth and final child however, Roxie, was unaccounted for, no one was quite certain where she had been when it had happened, save for her parents of course.

Chapter 1: The One That Got Away

Charlotte Watsford sighed deeply as she thought back over everything; the years that had passed, the wrongs she had committed when the power of being a mermaid had controlled her. She had to make up for all that she'd done or at the very least try, she hadn't been around much in recent years, she had returned to the Gold Coast when she heard about the tragedy, Lewisâ€|gone and those poor kids orphaned, she and the girls had had their differences but she was going to do all she could to help. As far as she knew she was the only mermaid left alive, she'd learned about Miss Chatham, her grandmother, Gracie's friend, since she had lost her powers as a mermaid. Unfortunately Louise had recently passed away too, sickness and age apparently. She was also the only one left who knew about the secret; the girls were gone as were their husbandsâ€|she had never met Emma's, unless it was Ash, in which case he might still be around, apparently Emma wasn't with her husband at the reunion.

Now she was off to try and find the children and convince their guardians to let her take them in, she knew it was going to be hard, particularly when it came to the Sertori's but she was determined and stubborn, but this time to do right.

Charlotte parked outside the Sertori's house, same old house her parents had lived in all their life, and walked up the drive to the front door sighing _may as well get the hardest one over with first._

She rang the bell and a young tall girl answered the door, Charlotte recognized Kim almost immediately, older, more woman than girl but otherwise she looked pretty much the same.

'Hi, Kim right' she started 'I don't know if you remember me, Charlotte Watsford.'

'Oh we remember' Kim said 'what are you doing back on the Gold Coast, Cleo thought you left.'

Charlotte nodded 'I did, but Cleo is the reason I'm back.'

Kim crossed her arms 'well it's your lucky day Charlotte, she'sâ€|' but Charlotte cut her off.

'Goneâ€|I know, I heard about the whole thing, that is why I'm here, to give my condolences' Charlotte said quietly 'may I please come in and speak with you and your father?'

Kim didn't look overly pleased with the idea but let her in anyway, as she did Mr Sertori came down the stairs 'Charlotteâ€|my goodness is that you, it's been a long time.'

Charlotte smiled 'I'm sorry for your loss Mr Sertori and my mother also sends her regards.'

'Oh well, thank you' said Don gesturing to the living room 'so what brings you here?'

Charlotte sighed 'it's aboutâ€|Kayla, Lewis and Cleo's daughter.'

Don nodded 'she's upstairs sleeping right now, what about

her?'

'With all due respect Mr Sertori, Lewis, the girls and Iâ€¦I admit we hadâ€¦our problems at one time but that is all the more reason why I wish to make up for them' Charlotte said slowly, wanting to take this with caution.

'What do you mean exactly' Don frowned.

'She means the way she and Cleo fought over Lewis' Kim chipped in.

Don nodded 'and how exactly do you want to make up for this?'

'I want to raise Kayla, I want permission to be her legal guardian' Charlotte said quickly.

'No way' Kim said 'Cleo has told me nothing but nasty things about you and Lewisâ€¦well he thinks you learned your lesson and often felt my sister exaggerated but stillâ€¦'

Don was looking thoughtful 'I really don't knowâ€¦I'm trying to think what they'd say if they were hear right nowâ€¦but I just never understood what went on between you kids enough.'

'Then I need you to trust me' Charlotte said 'I'm trying to make up for what I've done, you know what Lewis meant to me and I'm over my jealousy of Cleo.'

Don sighed 'alright, but only if you agree to keep us involved too and if I so much as hear anything bad I'm coming round to take her back myself, understood?'

Charlotte nodded 'yes, I promise you you've made the right choice, thank you Mr Sertori.'

Don nodded again as they headed to the front door 'I'll arrange the paperwork and you can pick her up soon alright goodbye for now.'

Charlotte sighed as she headed back to her car, that was slightly easier than she thought, but Kim might be a problem; she'd gone from being her sister's enemy to her sister's supporter. But then that was only natural considering what has happened, she was slightly worried how much Cleo has told Kim thoughâ€¦surely she hadn't revealed anything, had she?

As she got into her car she saw Kim watching her, narrow eyed, from the living room windowâ€¦yup, Kim was going to be, as always, a problem.

Next on her list was Eliot Gilbert, guardian of Elayne Gilbert; he had moved out of his parent's house and was living in an apartment not far from where he used to live. She parked on the curb, got out and went to the door. She looked for his name on the list of people living in the apartment and rang the appropriate bell.

After several moments a voice came on 'hello?'

'Eliot Gilbert?'

'Yeah, who is this?'

'My name is Charlotte Watsford, I don't know if you remember me, I used to be friends with Lewis and Cleo (it was the most likely time he'd remember, when he'd asked Lewis for girl advice).'

'Uhâ€|yeah I remember, come on in' he replied and buzzed her in.

When she got to his door she knocked and he opened it, wow had he grown and changed he was much more muscular but still very blonde 'hey, what brings you here Charlotte?'

'Umâ€|what happened to Emma actually, I'm really sorry about that by the way?'

Eliot closed the door then opened it all the way 'yeahâ€|me too, god, my parents are devastated, their still taking time off, trying to deal, but I'm ok taking care of the kidâ€|Emma did so much for me, I'd gladly repay her.'

A thought occurred to Charlotte then and she said 'umâ€|I have a couple of questions, if you don't mind my asking.'

'Sure' he said 'what do you want to know?'

'I've looked over everything andâ€|there is no mention of who the father isâ€|Elayne's father I mean' Charlotte said 'do you know?'

Eliot shook his head 'he wasn't at the party?'

'No, she was there alone, unlike the others, wasn't she with Ash?'

'She and Ash broke up years ago, it was a mutual thing I think, shame, I really liked the guy' Eliot replied.

'So when did she get pregnant?'

'She came back from holiday one year and within a few weeks it was pretty obvious' Eliot said casually.

Charlotte frowned 'that doesn't sound like Emma.'

Eliot shrugged 'even my sister can be impulsive on occasion, so we don't know the father, she's the only one that does, unless she told Rikki and Cleo.'

'Alsoâ€|no one knows where Rikki's daughter is, have you heard anything about that?'

Eliot shook his head 'nope only know about the other three.'

Charlotte nodded but then stopped, taking a moment to register what he'd just said 'threeâ€|don't you mean two?'

Eliot shook his head 'four kids were orphaned, I don't know much

about the forth oneâ€|uh Benjamin something or other, friend of mine knows the lady who looks after the kid.'

Charlotte nodded, making a mental note to check that out once she was done here, it could be nothing, completely unrelated but she still should check it out 'look Eliot, your only a young adultâ€|don't you think someone older should look after Elayne?'

Eliot raised his eyebrow 'not really, like who?'

Charlotte shrugged 'like me, look I got off on the wrong foot with the girlsâ€|and Lewis but I want to make it up to them, make up for my own mistakes, can you allow me to do this?'

Eliot thought it over 'well, I will be getting busy with studies soon, but I don't know how much Emma would have liked this, I would prefer to leave her with my parents.'

Giving him a card Charlotte said 'think about it, I promise you I will do the right thing, and I won't exclude you and your parents from her life, call me when you make up your mind. Oh one last thing, what was the address of that woman who has the fourth child?'

Eliot wrote down some directions and handed them to her 'good luck.'

Charlotte drove along the coast, following the directions, wondering as she went who this woman might be, she didn't want to turn up on the doorstep a complete stranger; she needed some sort of reason for being there.

She finally arrived, hoping her plan would work and knocked at the front door, the woman who opened the front door looked slightly older than her, with medium/short red hair and a slender figure.

'Can I help you' the woman said, a slight frown on her face.

Charlotte offered her hand 'hi I'm Charlotte Watsford, I used to know Cleo and the others?'

'Sophie, really, I don't re-call seeing you around, what do you mean by used to?'

'Umâ€|can we talk inside, it's getting dark out here and I'd rather speak more privately about this' Charlotte said.

Narrowing her eyes Sophie said 'I guess' she opened the door and let Charlotte in, once she continued 'tell me Miss Watsford what exactly is it that brought you hear to my door?'

Charlotte sighed 'I may be in the wrong place entirely, I apologize if I am, but it is kind of a long story.'

'I have time' Sophie said 'a proper explanation would beâ€|fitting at this point.'

Sighing Charlotte sat down 'well, it all began when I first moved to the Gold Coast, many years ago, I was 17 and first met Cleo and Lewis and through them Rikki and Emma.'

Sophie frowned and raised her hand to pause her 'I'm sorry I'm not familiar with that last oneâ€|Emmaâ€|'

'Emma Gilbert' Charlotte explained 'she was Cleo and Rikki's best friend, they did everything together, they were utterly inseparable most of the time.'

'Don't you mean Bella, Isabella Hartley, she was always hanging with Cleo and Rikki, when she wasn't flirting with my brother that is' Sophie replied.

Charlotte shook her head 'no, I've never heard of Bella.'

'But she was at the party when they all died, along with my brother, her husband' Sophie said 'if you knew these girls how could you not know Bella?'

'I could say the same of Emma' Charlotte argued 'Emma was at the party tooâ€|' she stopped then, they both seemed to have realised something at the same moment. The four girls knew each other butâ€|somehow she and Sophie had never crossed paths with Bella or Emma.

'Well, this is a very interesting discovery' said Sophie, though her voice didn't exactly express excitement, more exasperation.

Charlotte sat silently for a moment 'tell me about Bella?'

Sophie frowned at her 'I'm not entirely convinced by your story, do you have proof?'

Charlotte couldn't quite believe this woman but sighed and pulled out a picture, probably the only picture of the four of them that existed due to their problems with each other, the photo taken after their beach volleyball game.

She handed it to Sophie 'there, you see, that's me, Cleo, Rikki and Emma.'

Sophie frowned she pulled out a picture and showed it to Charlotte 'and here we have Cleo, Rikki and Bella, little older perhaps, but no Emmaâ€|so what are we missing' but she was speaking more to herself than Charlotte.

'When did you arrive on the Gold Coast' Charlotte asked.

'Ohâ€|I can't remember exactly, it was the same summer Rikki's opened' Sophie said.

Charlotte looked puzzled 'what is Rikki's?'

'You know, the place Zane and Rikki use to run together, I helped manage it, Bella was a singer there too, it used to be called theâ€|JuiceNet or something I think' Sophie said with a wave, dismissing the old name.

'The JuiceNet went out of business? Zane and Rikki running a clubâ€|what else changed around here?'

Sophie gave a small laugh 'how am I supposed to know? I don't know when you were here do I?'

Charlotte sat thoughtfully, so maybe this fourth child was a mermaid too, if Bella was a mermaid 'did Bella ever seem, strange to you' she asked Sophie.

'Strangeâ€|no, she was pretty and a talented singer I'll give her that but that is as far as her abilities went I think, never knew much about her family or background, she just showed up on the Gold Coast and never left' Sophie explained.

Charlotte looked at the picture of Bella again, she was indeed pretty 'the necklace's, the ones around their neck, any idea where those are now?'

Sophie shrugged, uninterested 'they never took them off, never, so I suspect their gone.'

Charlotte nodded sadly 'guess so, that brings us to the discussion of Bella's child then I guess.'

Looking at Charlotte Sophie frowned 'excuse me?'

'I had a close connection to these girls Sophie, I know you think you understand them butâ€|believe me you don't' Charlotte started but Sophie didn't let her get very far.

'Let me get something very clear to you Miss Watsford, I may have had my problems with Bella but I tolerated her for my brother's sake, Becka is my niece, I have every right to her' Sophie said angrily.

'I'm not talking about Becka, I'm smart Sophie, you said you worked for Zane and Rikkiâ€|Roxie has been missing for sometime, care to explain that one?'

'I have no idea what you are talking about' said Sophie, but she looked guilty.

Charlotte nodded 'well I could call the police, let them handle this.'

'Alright, but it won't make any difference if you did' Sophie said, she pulled out a file and some papers 'here, read them.'

Charlotte looked through the papers, it was pretty obvious Zane had been well prepared and had a back-up plan for Roxieâ€|but what concerned Charlotte was she saw no signature of Rikki's anywhere.

'As you can see Zane has left specific instructions that were anything to happen to him and Rikki, I was to take care of Roxie.'

'Funny' said Charlotte 'I don't see any mention of Rikki in these papers.'

Sophie laughed 'you seriously think they make such decisions alone,

I'm sure they were in agreement' Charlotte wasn't so sure.

'It says here that the condition to this is that you hand her over to someone at the age of 16' Charlotte frowned, wondering who on earth that could be.

Sophie nodded 'yes, Becka also has to visit the same person when she reaches that age; it was left in a note from Will and Bella.'

Charlotte looked at Sophie 'so there is nothing I can do to convince you to let me adopt Roxie?'

'Absolutely nothing' Sophie said 'now, I think it is time for you to leave' she got up and guided Charlotte out to the front door.

2. Chapter 2

Chapter 2: A Tail From The Past

5 years later

Charlotte sat on the back porch looking out at the beach, she remembered so vividly how she used to swim in the ocean as a mermaid, she missed it greatly, but it wasn't worth what it turned her into, she just wasn't cut out for being a mermaid. She used to dislike the girls but now she highly respected them, even if it was far too late, they had mastered their powers, almost on a spiritual level and had been one with their powers and the ocean, a true affinity.

'Auntie Charlotte' came a voice and she turned to see Kayla running up to her, my god she looked more and more like Cleo every day, her skin was already quite dark and exotic despite only being 6 years old and her hair was a dark chocolate brown.

'Yes sweetie, what is it?'

'I'm bored, Elayne is too, can't we go to the Marine Park?'

Charlotte smiled 'you always want to go to the Marine Park, you're just like your mother' she said quietly.

'What do you mean auntie?'

Getting up and kneeling down in front of her she said 'your mother used to work at the Marine Park you know and she loved dolphins just like you do' she tapped Kayla's nose making her giggle.

'You never speak much about mama' Kayla said 'why not?'

Charlotte sighed 'I'll tell you girls everything, one day, when you're older.'

Kayla looked sad, sensing the tears coming on Charlotte sighed 'ok, come on, I'll take you girls to the Marine Park, go get ready.'

The three of them walked along the path in the Marine Park, watching the dolphins in the water. Dolphins still made Charlotte slightly

uncomfortable but she wasn't as scared as them as she used to be.

'Auntie, can we get ice creams' Elayne asked, jumping up and down excitedly; she too looked a lot like Emma, with her blue eyes and golden blonde hair but as she didn't know the father who the other attributes were from she wasn't sure.

'Yeah, I think that would be ok, but not too much alright' Charlotte said as they approached the ice cream cart.

While the girls ordered their ice creams she looked around and suddenly saw a familiar face, Sophie Benjamin, she hadn't seen her for at least a year. The two girls that walked either side of her must be Roxie and Becka; Roxie was instantly obvious to her, she had the same light blonde wavy hair and blue eyes as Rikki. She'd never met Bella but based on the photo, she was turning out to look just like her.

Charlotte paid for the ice creams and then started to walk over to Sophie but the moment she saw Charlotte she guided the two kids away in the opposite direction.

'Was that Becka and Roxie' asked Kayla curiously.

Charlotte looked down at her 'you know them?'

'No, I've just seen them around, is that their mom?'

Not sure how to answer that one, Charlotte finally said 'no, she just takes care of them, she's Becka's auntie.'

'Are they like us' Elayne asked as she licked her ice cream, Charlotte smiled, Elayne always had been smart, just like Emma.

'More than you know' Charlotte said quietly, she doubted the girls had heard her; they had lost interest and gone back to watching the dolphins.

Later that evening, after the family had their dinner, Charlotte tucked the two kids into bed 'auntie, tell us a story' Elayne said.

Charlotte sighed, wondering if maybe now was a good time to at least tell them some of the truth, even if it was in the form of a story.

'Alright' she finally said 'I'm going to tell you a story about three mermaids; they lived right here on the beautiful Gold Coast. Ilana was beautiful and exotic and had the power to move water and control the wind. Coral was cool, strong headed but soft at her core and she had the ability to freeze water and make snow. Anna was fiery, passionate, untameable as the ocean itself and could boil water and create lighting.

The girls listened intently, clearly enchanted by the story already.

'The three mermaids were able to walk on land when dry and walk with

normal people, there they met and fell in love with boys but they feared their secret would be discovered and no one would understand' Charlotte continued.

'Why wouldn't they understand' Kayla asked, confused.

Elayne rolled her eyes 'because their mermaids dummy.'

'Hey don't call me a dummy' Kayla said angrily.

Charlotte shushed them 'girls, don't be mean to your sister Elayne, but you are right, people would not understand.'

'So what happened next' Kayla asked frowning.

'A fourth mermaid arrived, Aqua, she was a powerful and cunning mermaid, she had all the powers the others had, she was jealous of Ilana for she loved the same boy. When Ilana and the boy broke up Aqua used her devious ways to keep the boy to herself.'

'She sounds really mean' Elayne said frowning.

Charlotte smiled 'she was, but Aqua learned that too much power is a dangerous thing, too much magic can get out of control and she was beaten by the other three mermaids.'

'How' asked Kayla 'she sounds so much stronger than them?'

'There is a magic moon pool where the mermaids lived and when the full moon hovers over every 50 years, any mermaid in the pool loses her powersâ€|for ever, the three mermaids almost lost theirs but instead they managed to drop Aqua into the pool' Charlotte explained.

'I bet that taught her a lesson' Elayne said smiling.

Charlotte nodded 'it did indeed, but you must remember girls, everyone deserves a second chance, even people like Aqua, one day I'll explain to you more, but for now, you get some sleep.'

After Charlotte left the room Elayne turned to Kayla 'where do you think auntie gets such amazing and imaginative stories from, they sound soâ€|real, almost as if she experiences every second of it.'

Kayla shrugged 'I don't know but I watch her sometimes, when she thinks nobody is around, she looks at photos and stares into spaceâ€|she says one day she'll tell me what her connection was to mummy and your mum too.'

Elayne nodded 'she's been saying that for years though.'

Meanwhile over at Sophie Benjamin's house Roxie and Becka lay in their beds but they weren't tired.

'Roxie' Becka said sitting up to look at her sister.

Roxie frowned, she kind of found her sister annoying, especially when she was so happy and bubbly, it just didn't seem normal for someone to be like that 'what?'

'I was just wondering' Becka said thoughtfully 'why do you think Auntie Sophie doesn't like us talking to Kayla and Elayne?'

Roxie just shrugged, the thought had never really crossed her mind, she never really thought much about things 'I don't know.'

'Maybe the Charlotte lady is a witch' Becka said thoughtfully.

Snorting Roxie smirked 'don't be silly, no such thing.'

'How do you know' Becka snapped back.

Just then they heard Sophie's voice 'girl's, go to sleep, don't make me come up there!'

The two girls curled up and went to sleep, dreaming strange and magical dreams; dreams of the sea, of dolphins, of mermaids but when they woke the next morning they remembered nothing of it.

3. Chapter 3

Chapter 3: The Truth

6 years later

Roxie and Becky sat watching TV, Roxie wasn't really as interested in the programs as Becky; music and dance, sure she liked music but it wasn't her kind of music.

Roxie was coming to that age and maturity where boys were a lot more interesting, whether it was to tease and play pranks on or other more awkward reasons was another matter though. Becka on the other hand was a lot more shy and awkward around boys for the most part.

As the years had gone by the two girls had seen Kayla and Elayne many times but they were kind of like the friends they knew but yet knew nothing about; they saw them in school, passed each other at all the local places and even occasionally hung out but it was soon interrupted by their Aunt Sophie.

Roxie had slowly begun to become suspicious and curious as to why this was, she was also more rebellious and liked to defy Sophie by nature. When Sophie wasn't around Becka had to admit she was highly curious too but she wasn't willing to do anything that would anger Sophie.

Watching her sister Roxie sighed thoughtfully 'when does Sophie get home?'

Becka looked back at her from where she was lying flat, watching TV 'not for another hour I think, why?'

'Because I'm bored, I want to go out and do something, something fun' Roxie said, uncrossing her legs and standing up. Roxie has stopped wearing skirts or girly sort of clothes long ago; she was all about pants or shorts now.

Becka stood up, unlike her sister she was still quite into dresses, but at least she had good fashion tastes 'Sophie said we weren't to leave the house while she was gone.'

'Sophie isn't going to know about it, right' Roxie said putting her hand on Becka's shoulder.

Becka bit her lip, looking uncertain 'what do you want to do?'

Taking her sister by the hand Roxie guided her out the house 'come on, I got an idea.'

Charlotte sat outside in her back yard with Eliot, 'so, how are things going Eliot.'

'Not bad thanks, so where is my niece?'

'She's probably swimming, she spends all her time at the local swim pool nowadays, either that or the ocean' Charlotte replied.

Eliot laughed 'just like Emma, like mother like daughter.'

After a long silence Charlotte said 'yeah, there has been a lot of thatâ€|a really strange amount.'

Eliot frowned 'what do you mean?'

Looking inside the house to make sure they were alone Charlotte said 'they are so similar to Cleo and Emma, not just physically but in personality as well; Kayla is practically a clone of Cleo and she loves dolphins, fishing and science. I suspect some of that is Lewis butâ€|still.'

'Don Sertori said that Cleo used to be scared of water, Kayla doesn't seem to have that problem' Eliot said reasonably.

Charlotte shrugged 'I guess, then there is Elayne, not only does she look like Emma but she loves swimming, she's smart and mature for her age.'

'That does sound a lot like Emma, no idea who the father is thenâ€|you never looked into that?'

Charlotte shook her head 'maybe one dayâ€|I'll let her make that decision once she's a little older.'

Kayla came round the side of the house 'Aunt Charlotte, I'm home' seeing Eliot she made a girly squeal that reminded both the adults of Cleo way too much 'Eliot' she ran over to him and gave him a hug where he sat.

'Is your sister with you Kayla' Charlotte asked.

'No, but I passed by the pool, I think she was almost finished, they were all getting out and going to get changed' Kayla replied as she let go of Eliot.

Charlotte nodded 'alright, I better start preparing some lunch, Eliot you're welcome to stay if you want.'

Eliot smiled 'I would, but I have somewhere I have to be, I'll come back another time soon to see Elayne, I promise.'

Charlotte followed Eliot to the front door to say goodbye to him, leaving Kayla alone in the back yard where she sat on a rock, sighing and fidgeting with her hands.

It was just then she heard a noise coming from the bushes opposite her and she looked over at them, frowning, she moved over to them and she heard the bushes rustle and the sound of feet rapidly moving 'hey' she said 'who's there?'

Kayla grabbed a bucket of water and poured it over the bush, two figures screamed and jumped out collapsing over each other 'hey whoâ€|Roxieâ€|Becka?'

'Was that really necessary' said Roxie looking really irritated as she pulled herself off her sister and helped Becka to her feet.

'Sorry' Kayla said rubbing the back of her neck awkwardly 'but what were you doing back there?'

Becka looked like she was about to speak but she was interrupted by Elayne's arrival 'hey I'm homeâ€|what are you two doing here?'

'Wellâ€|' said Becka but again was cut off by Roxie.

'We were spying on you, but only cause we're curious, we knowâ€|nothing about you even though we see you plenty of times'

Elayne frowned 'you shouldn't spy on people, it's wrong you know?'

'Yeah, whatever blah blah blah' Roxie said 'we just wanted to hang, get to know each other a bit.'

Coming back out of the house Charlotte appeared 'what's going on here?'

Becka gasped, clearly worried she and Roxie were busted 'we're sorry; it was Roxie she made me come.'

Charlotte smiled 'I don't doubt that, if Roxie is anything like her motherâ€|'

Roxie's eyes went wide 'you knew my mom?'

Moving out into the backyard to stand properly in front of the four girls Charlotte nodded 'that's right; I also knew Elayne and Kayla's, which is why I now take care of them.'

'Aunt Sophie said my parents died when I was very young' Roxie said 'she said she knew them too.'

Charlotte nodded 'yesâ€|I don't know Sophie very wellâ€|butâ€|' she wasn't sure if she should say anythingâ€|was now really the right

time.

'But what' Becka asked curiously.

Charlotte stepped aside and gestured for them go inside 'come inside girlsâ€¦I think it's time I told you everything.'

They all moved inside and got settled in the living room, the four girls sat awkwardly around the room and Charlotte sat on the main chair, feeling uncomfortableâ€¦oh where to begin.

'Is this the time you're finally going to tell us more' Elayne asked, referring back to the stories they'd been told and small bits about their parents.

Becka looked at Elayne 'what are you talking about?'

Charlotte sighed and began 'alright girls, this is a very difficult and long story, but I can promise you it is all true, every word of it. Kayla, Roxie and Elayneâ€¦I knew your mothers and you fathers too actually, we all lived here on the Gold Coast.'

'What about my parents' asked Becka'

Charlotte looked at the young girl 'I'm afraid I didn't know yours, they arrived after I left the Gold Coast.'

'I thought you didn't know my father' Elayne said frowning in confusion.

Charlotte nodded 'yes, your right, but I knew Lewis, who was your father Kayla and a boy I loved as well. I also knew Zane, your father Roxie.'

'But if you knew my parents, why am I living with Sophie' Roxie asked.

Charlotte watched Becka and Roxie 'don't you like Sophie?'

They both kind of shrugged 'she can be kind of mean and bossy' Becka said 'but she means well I think.'

'I think she is just plain mean' Roxie replied 'can't we live with you Charlotte?'

Shaking her head Charlotte sighed 'it's not that easy, Sophie is your real Aunt Becka, your father's sister, she has a right to look after you.'

'And what about me' asked Roxie, her eyebrow raised.

'Your parents left instructions, if anything happened to them, you were to live with her' Charlotte explained 'I tried to convince her when you were youngâ€¦but she wouldn't haven't it.'

'So that is why she is avoiding you all the time, and telling us to stay away from you' Roxie said.

Kayla raised her hand 'soâ€¦about our parentsâ€¦'

Charlotte nodded 'yes' where was I, ah yes, you see when I first arrived here, your mother and father were already together Kayla, but it didn't stop me liking Lewis.'

The girls listened as I thought how best to explain this 'the three of them were like' sisters and were always so secretive, and Lewis was in on this secret club of theirs, whatever it was, and I always felt jealous.'

'Jealous' said Kayla, sounding surprised.

'There is one thing you must understand girls, I wasn't always such a nice person' I've made many mistakes and I paid a great price for them; taking care of you is part of how I hope to make up for the things I've done.'

Moving closer to Charlotte, Elayne asked 'you can tell us Auntie, what happened?'

'I grew to dislike your parents' almost hate them but that isn't how I feel anymore, now I truly respect them, what they achieved.'

The girls looked at each other, clearly confused 'what do you mean by that, what did they achieve' Kayla asked.

Charlotte looked at Kayla and Elayne 'do the two of you remember the story I told you, the one about the mermaids?'

They both nodded 'yeah' Elayne said 'Ilana, Coral and Anne with the evil mermaid Aqua.'

Roxie rolled her eyes 'mermaids' come on, you can't be serious.'

Charlotte raised her finger to silence them 'think back on the story and what I have just told you now.'

Her eyes going wide Elayne said 'oh wow, wait a minute.'

'What' Kayla looked terribly confused.

'Are you trying to tell us the story was true' Elayne asked 'but that's' '

Charlotte nodded 'you have no reason to believe me, but I promise you it's true; your mothers were mermaids' and once, so was I.'

Roxie laughed 'this is utterly ridiculous, why should I believe you?'

Elayne gave an exasperated noise 'the story, it all makes sense now but' who was who?'

Sitting back in the chair Charlotte sighed, she'd been dreaded this part 'Ilana was Cleo, Coral was Emma and Anne was Rikki.'

She let the kids register that for a moment 'which means I was Aqua.'

'Wow' said Kayla 'this is amazing, so are we going to be mermaids

too?'

Roxie stood up 'I don't know about you three but this is all ridiculous, there is no such thing as mermaids' turning to Becka she said 'come on, we should get going.'

Becka didn't look so sure 'what about my mum was she a mermaid too?'

'I'm sorry Becka, I don't know but I suspect she was' Charlotte said.

Roxie looked impatient and Charlotte was about to say something when she saw something that made her gasp, a jar of water on the counter top was bubbling and steaming so furiously it looked like it might explode.

'Oh my goodness, Roxie look' Charlotte pointed at the jar, she hadn't needed to though, the girls had already noticed it by the time she had.

Staring speechless at the boiling jar of water Roxie said 'didâ€|did I do that?'

Charlotte nodded, she had hardly expected the girl's powers to start surfacing naturally or this early in life for that matter, she figured she'd have to take them to Mako Island one day before their powers came. They swam without a problem soâ€|she was highly confused right now. Then it came to herâ€|it must be genetic, they don't have the ability to transform yet, but their powers must have been passed on genetically as the girls were all still mermaids when the kids were born.

'Roxie' said Becka with amazement 'you just boiled water, like magic or something.'

Still standing, Roxie was just looking at the jar, clearly at a loss for words.

'Your mother could do the exact same thing' Charlotte said 'she had the power to boil water, dry up a whole pool if she wanted too.'

Roxie looked at Charlotte 'wow, that is kind of cool.'

'Soâ€|like the story' Kayla said 'my mom could move water right?'

Charlotte nodded 'that's right, not just move it but shift it into various forms, a very useful power but not one to be abused.'

'So I'm the one who can freeze things am I' Elayne asked sounding rather excited.

Becka looked a little put out so Charlotte looked over at her 'what's the matter Becka?'

'I don't know if I'm a mermaid let alone have powers, I guess I just would like to find out for sure' Becka explained.

'You mustn't get ahead of yourselves girls' Charlotte said 'you must be responsible with these powers and keep them secret, it is not a game.'

'When do you think they'll appear' asked Elayne curiously 'I can't believe Roxie got hers already.'

'I don't know' Charlotte said 'just be careful, strong emotions is what will cause it to happen probably.'

There was suddenly a rapid knocking at the front door and Charlotte got up to answer it, standing on the front doorstep was Sophie looking utterly furious, seeing Becka and Roxie she pointed at them 'you two get over here NOW!'

Roxie finally spoke 'why didn't you tell us Sophie, why have you kept me and Becka in the dark?'

Sophie narrowed her eyes and looked at Charlotte 'what have you been telling them? What ridiculous stories have you been filling their heads with?'

'I merely told them what they deserve to know, the truth' Charlotte said her arms folded across her chest 'regardless of what you think these four girls belong together.'

Sophie didn't say anything she just guided Roxie and Becka out and they left without another word, but Charlotte could see the two girls look back at her, clearly uncertain and slightly longing.

4. Chapter 4

Chapter 4: Something Old, Something New

4 years later

Charlotte watched the two girls enjoying the beach from the back yard; Kayla lying on a towel in the sand, taking in the rays and Elayne surfboarding with a few of her friends.

First swimming, then diving and now surfing; pretty much anything water related was Elayne's passion. She had a crew of friends in that lifestyle but Kayla was more important to her than anyone else, real sister or not and she never excluded her.

Kayla meanwhile had become quite a smart girl (though still not as smart as Elayne) and though she had her insecurities, not unlike Cleo, she was a little more like Lewis Charlotte thought.

Both the girls had discovered their power earlier than expected; Kayla had discovered it on her 14th birthday and Elayne when she was 13. By now they more or less had the hang of it but Charlotte still felt she'd like to test them just to be sure.

Roxie and Becka disobeyed Sophie on almost a daily basis now and were becoming close friends with Kayla and Elayne. Becka had got her power at the age of 15. Charlotte had yet to see Becka's power and she had to admit she was highly curious, she only knew of three powers, what could this fourth one be?

'Hey Charlotte' said Kayla as she came up from the beach, since the girls had turned fifteen, they had stopped calling her "aunt" most of the time.

'Hey sweetie, good time on the beach?'

Kayla nodded, her towel wrapped around her slender waist, she pulled a pale blue top on over her violet bikini 'yeah great, perfect day for sunbathing, not too hot but still enough rays to tan the body.'

Charlotte couldn't believe how much the girls had grown up, how fast it had flown by; it felt like only yesterday she had taken in Kayla from the Sertori's.

'Something the matter' Kayla asked, looking at Charlotte with concern.

'No, it's nothing' she replied 'you just look so much like your mother, I feel like I'm reliving my youth' Charlotte sighed and wiped her eyes.

Kayla reached in and gave her a hug 'hey, it's ok, you told us everything and we understand.'

Elayne came up from the beach wearing navy blue wetsuit 'hey sis, Charlotte.'

'Hey' Charlotte replied 'girls, it's time I show you the heart of the mermaid magic but we all have to go there together, can you call Roxie and Becka.'

Nodding Elayne said 'yeah sure, where are we going?'

Standing up Charlotte said 'you'll soon find out, just meet me at the docks.'

The four girls headed towards the docks, not far from where they were setting up a new Smoothie Café, previously the place called Rikki's.

Roxie looked over in the direction of the building being renovated 'wow to think my parents used to run that place, Sophie never told us anything and Charlotte'well I misjudged her.'

'My mum used to sing there too' Becka added 'I really wish I could see that, I wonder if anyone ever recorded it?'

Kayla sighed 'so much stuff we didn't know, but now we do, where do you think she's taking us anyway?'

'Mako Island' Elayne said 'it has to be, it is the only place that makes sense.'

Roxie nodded 'yeah I think you're right.'

'But aren't there like'a loads of sharks around Mako' asked Becka nervously.

'All the more reason why it is probably Mako, hardly anyone ever goes there' Elayne replied.

The four of them walked down onto the docks and along a jetty towards an a small boat where Charlotte was waiting for them 'good you're all here, I got us a reliable boat with a motor, I doubt any of us want to row out to Mako Island.'

'Told you' Elayne said to the others smugly.

'I see you've all been wondering where I plan to take you' Charlotte said, smiling.

Roxie nodded 'but we had a feeling it was Mako, after all you've told usâ€|it was the only place that made sense.'

Charlotte nodded 'everyone in then, I'll explain more as we go.'

As they headed towards the mysterious Mako Island, which had been almost completely undisturbed since the death of the previous mermaids, Charlotte explained to them about the island.

'Mako Island is how your parents first became mermaids, by the time I got here they already were mermaids, but this is where it all first began. I recall them mentioning it one time; it all happened by accident, they got stuck adrift and headed to Mako as it was the nearest land.'

The girls looked at each other then back at Charlotte 'what happened then' Kayla asked.

'While exploring the island they stumbled upon a cave and in that cave was an old volcano crater with a pool of water that had the moonlight shining down on it from the hole in the sky above, the moonpool' Charlotte explained.

'The what' Roxie frowned.

'The moonpool is the source of much mermaid magic and it is what transformed your parents into mermaidsâ€|by accident, they had no idea until the next day; the moment they touched water whether it was a drop or a bath, salt water or fresh water they became mermaids.'

The girls looked at each other with amazement 'wow, that is really weird but it's just like the story you used to tell us' Elayne said.

'So what if we become mermaids' Becka asked 'how do we avoid water all the time, this is the Gold Coast.'

Charlotte sighed 'trying to find a balance between the two worlds is hard, for some it is impossible, I wasn't cut out for it, the power was too much, it controlled me rather than the other way around. Cleo had a lot of trouble with it as wellâ€|but she managed to find the balance in the end, not like me.'

'So after you lost your powers, what happened' asked Kayla, brushing the wind swept hair out of her face.

'I stayed on the Gold Coast a while longerâ€|but then left, I don't know what went on with your parents after that, that is where Sophie and your parents came in Becka' Charlotte said 'but once I learned about their deaths I came back I did research and I learned with amazement that they had perfectly balanced their lives, with an affinity for water and the ocean; human on one side/ mermaid on the other.'

'I still don't quite get how we're supposed to avoid water our whole life' Kayla said frowning.

'Avoiding it is impossible, the key is being careful and of course ensuring your secret doesn't get out, I will always be there to help anyway I can in this; the slightest water on your skin will transform you so drink out of straws, if you get wet in public hide somewhere private, if it has a lock even better, always have a way to contact each other for help if these situations arise. Also if you get wet near the ocean, simply leap into it and swim away quickly.'

Elayne frowned 'I'm not so sure about this, it sounds seriously risky, plus all my swimmingâ€|'

'Oh come on' Roxie replied 'you'd be swimming for real, with the ocean, you don't need a board when you have a tail.'

Charlotte let the girls talk over it, she couldn't really decide for them, this was their decision, they may have been born with other powersâ€|but the rest was up to them.

They arrived on the island and Charlotte began leading them in land, it was eerie and unnatural how it hadn't changed at all over the years.

They finally arrived at the far too familiar rock by a small trickling river; Charlotte remembered how she and Lewis had sat here, how they'd kissed.

'So where now' asked Becka standing tall and looking around.

Kayla looked walked across the rock 'yeah, not exactly anything he' but then she gave a shriek and fell away into a hole.

'Kayla' Elayne said running over quickly, moving carefully to not fall in herself 'we need to get her out!'

Charlotte moved over 'relax, we all need to go down there' she explained 'Kayla are you okay?'

They could just faintly hear her voice 'yeah, I'm ok, kind of dark down here though.'

'We're coming down ok, move away from the hole' Charlotte said 'alright girls, in you go.'

One by one each of the girls went down and finally Charlotte came down, leaving a rope to climb up just in case this didn't turn out how she thought it was going to.

Turning on a flash light she guided the girls up the stairs and into the large circular moonpool room 'and here we areâ€|the moonpool'

Charlotte said.

The room hadn't changed much, it had seemed to suffer some damage since she'd last been here, some walls were dented and fractured like pieces of rock had been blown away but otherwise it was the same.

'Wow' said Becka looking up at the volcano 'this is amazing.'

'Yeah' added Elayne 'gotta agree with you there.'

Kayla was kneeling by the water's edge, gently running her fingers back and forth through it 'soâ€¦what now?'

Charlotte clapped her hands together, trying to sound professional and like a coach 'now I want each of you to show me your powers, I want to see you can control them properly.'

Roxie stepped forward 'please allow me to take the lead' she raised her hand and focused it on the pool it began to bubble and steam furiously.

'Impressive, can u stop it' Charlotte asked calmly.

Roxie gave a simple jerk of her hand and the water cooled down instantly 'impressive right, I've been practising.'

Stepping up beside Roxie, Kayla lifted up three orbs full of water 'can you stop these Roxie' she asked moving them swiftly towards her.

Roxie lifted her hand and dried up the three orbs 'that was too easy Kayla, don't you have anything better?'

Lifting a large column of water Kayla moved it towards Roxie but she evaporated it as it approached.

'Ok, slow down you two' Charlotte said 'very impressive both of you. Now let's see you Becka.'

Moving to the pool Becka turned the surface of the water semi-hard, into some strange jelly like substance 'wow' said Charlotte 'that is really weird.'

Becka laughed 'I don't know, I always thought it was kind of fun.'

After a few seconds the water returned back to its normal form 'so Becka, what ways could you use this power?'

'Umâ€¦I don't know, I've never really thought about itâ€¦oh I suppose I could use it to get over water, like I did just here' she said.

'All right Elayne, you're last but certainly not least' Charlotte said.

Elayne nodded 'Kayla could you lift one of those water balls for me?'

Nodding Kayla did so and Elayne froze it solid 'how was that Charlotte?'

'Good, but I want to know you can slowly freeze as well, if you freeze too fast it could be dangerous' Charlotte replied.

Rolling her eyes Elayne went to the water, raised her arm and slowly it began to freeze.

When the pool was finally frozen, Elayne lowered her arm and the pool slowly went back to normal.

Charlotte applauded and smiled 'well done girls, I'm very proud of all of you, you have done very well with your powers for your age, better than your parents did I think.'

'So what do we do now' asked Becka curiously.

Charlotte looked at her watch, then up at the volcano 'nowâ€¦we wait.'

Night came on and the full moon began to rise into the sky, the four girls sat around the moonpool, starting to get impatient but Charlotte sat quietly and calmly. The full moon was rising tonight would finally be the night, the night new mermaids would be born.

'So how exactly do we become mermaids' Elayne asked curiously 'you said it was to do with the moon pool right?'

Charlotte nodded 'yes every full moon this pool is capable of great magic, including turning people into mermaids.'

The four girls looked at the pool 'soâ€¦we have to jump in there when the moon is above us' Kayla asked frowning.

'You sound like you have doubts' Charlotte said 'the moon is nearly here, if you do I'd say so now.'

Kayla looked thoughtful 'I don't knowâ€¦I want to be like my mum butâ€¦this just sounds a littleâ€¦too much.'

'We're with you' said Roxie 'I'm totally in this, one hundred percent.'

Becka nodded 'me too.'

'Despite everything I might have to give upâ€¦I want to be a part of this, come on Kayla don't be the odd one out sis' Elayne said.

'You have to hurry girls' Charlotte said, looking up at the sky, the full moon was half in view now and the pool was starting to bubble gently.

The four of girls grasped hands, took one last look at each other and jumped into the moon pool, just as the full moon came over. The pool shone bright as the silvery moonlight came down onto it and light sparkled up from the pool as it bubbled and frothed madly.

The light seemed stronger than Charlotte remembered it but from what

she could see of the four girls wading in the water, they were still human, drifting there in their wet clothes.

Then it happened there was a blinding flash and the water swirled and bubbled more rapidly, when the flash faded and the water calmed down, the moon had left over the other side of the volcano.

Charlotte looked down at the water, the girls were somewhere under the water but she could already see somethingâ€|different and she didn't mean the tails from their waist downwards.

The first girl to come to the surface was Roxie 'whoa, that wasâ€|weirdâ€|' it was then Roxie noticed what Charlotte had.

'What's with my hair' Roxie asked holding strands of it between her fingers 'did this happen before?'

Charlotte shook her head, Roxie's hair had turned a deep scarlet red 'this is weird I have no idea why this happened.'

Turning to Becka and Kayla as they came she gasped because they also had weird hair colours; Kayla's had turned almost completely violet save for a few remaining strands of brown here and there. Becka's golden blonde hair remained the same but it was now streaked with numerous strands of teal/ aquamarine colour.

Elayne surfaced a few seconds after them, her hair was a fairly drastic change; it was now a very pale white-blond with various blue streaks through it.

As all four of them looked at their hair in clear confusion Elayne said 'what is this? Why has our hair changed like this? Is this permanent?'

Charlotte had no idea what to say to them, this was utterly new to her but she had a theory, though it was only a theory 'I think perhaps because your parents were mermaids and the magic was already strong in your bloodâ€| it has slightly changed how you look, as mermaids at least.'

'So this is only when we're mermaids' Roxie asked, sounding unsure.

'I don't really mind' Becka said looking at her new hair 'I kind of like it, and if you think about it makes it harder for us to be recognised too.'

Pulling herself out of the water, tail and all Roxie muttered 'well there is only one way to find out if we're stuck with this hair' she began drying herself with her power.

The other three watched, waiting to find out the answer; Roxie turned back to normal and her hair was perfectly normal again as well.

'There you go, you see, it's only when you're mermaids' said Charlotte hoping that wasn't going to put any of them off.

Becka raised her hand 'slight problem, how do we get out of

here?'

'There is an underwater tunnel that leads outside' Elayne said 'I saw it, am I right?'

Charlotte nodded 'you are, it leads right outside, you don't have to worry about sea creatures when you're a mermaid, they ignore you most of the time, too big for most of them to consider attacking.'

'But what about you' asked Kayla 'how are you going to get out of here?'

'I'll go back the way we came, I'm in no hurry, you girls go and enjoy your new mermaid abilities, just remember, be careful and responsible' Charlotte said.

The four girls dived under the water, one after the other and swam out into the ocean; the feel of swimming was as natural to them as breathing.

The four girls dried off and then moved along the empty beach, the sky still dark.

'Wow, I just can't believe how amazing that was' said Becka trying not to be too loud.

Elayne laughed 'I know, I never thought anything could replace diving and surfing but when you're doing it like this, so much better.'

'I just feel like I'm so much closer to everything now, the magic, my parents' Kayla added.

As the four girls continued to talk and walk they were oblivious to someone who was watching them from a distance. The man stared at the girls through binoculars, frowning, it couldn't be, it was impossible, but they looked so similar. His heart ached purely to stare at them, especially the one with golden blonde hair and blue eyes.

5. Chapter 5

Chapter 5: Get Off My Tail

The sun rose over the sunny Gold Coast the next day as Elayne cruised peacefully through reefs deep underwater in her mermaid form. She loved the freedom of her new mermaid form, it was better than anything else she'd experienced.

Her long white blonde and blue hair flowed behind her in the water, looking graceful and natural; at first she wasn't so sure about the hair but now that she thought about it, it kind of made sense and suited the rest of her mermaid form.

She rose up to the surface of the water and looked around, she wasn't far from the beach but no one was around, she had left the house early, far too tempted to have a swim again to sleep anymore. She was pretty sure Kayla and Charlotte were still asleep.

Diving back underwater she shot off in a jet of water around the

coast until she was further along and near the docks where she could see the new café, she couldn't get too close though, there were a few people around the boardwalks.

She moved away behind some rocks, past the inlet, and went to the shore to dry herself off.

Drying herself off wasn't easy, unlike Roxie, she and the others didn't have the power to just steam dry. Her tail did seem to have this natural water absorbing quality though, meaning it dried fairly quickly, plus the Gold Coast heat helped.

Once she was a normal human again she walked up onto the path and headed back towards the café to take a closer look. As she walked she couldn't help feeling like she was being watched and she looked around, she saw one other person further down the path but he wasn't looking her way. Her mobile rang, making her jump slightly and she answered it.

'Hello' said Elayne feeling slightly paranoid.

'Elayne, it's me, Kayla, where are you?'

Elayne breathed a sigh 'sorry I just went for another swim, I couldn't resist.'

Kayla sounded relieved 'ok, just wish you'd told me.'

'I didn't want to wake you' Elayne replied 'sorry.'

'Well where are you, I'll come and join you' Kayla asked curiously.

Elayne sighed and looked around 'I'm not far from the new café|I'm thinking I might just find some breakfast nearby.'

'Ok, I'll be there as soon as I can' Kayla replied and then hung up.

As Elayne hung up her phone she felt that feeling again and turned to look behind her, someone had just moved out of view but she could swear that he or she had been following her a second ago.

Moving a little faster she headed over to the new café, closed as it was, it still had people around and just as she turned round the outside of the café she ran into someone and fell back to the floor.

'Oh god, I'm so sorry' said a male voice 'I|Elayne|is that you?'

Looking up at the guy with sandy blonde hair, blue eyes, wearing only a vest and dirty shorts, she frowned not sure where he knew her from.

'Evan' he said pointing at himself 'we have several classes together' he explained, he offered his hand to help her up and she took it.

'Um|right' she said but couldn't honestly remember him, and felt

strangely guilty about that.

Evan grinned 'you don't remember me do you.'

'No I do' said Elayne, trying to be nice but it was pretty hopeless.

'It's ok' he replied 'you do seem fairly absorbed in your work most of the time.'

Deciding to change the subject she said 'soâ€|what are you doing here?'

'Oh I'm helping them set up the new cafÃ©, little extra money you know, cafÃ©'s got a lot of history to it they were saying, been owned by a lot of people over the years' Evan explained looking up at the building.

_You have no idea _Elayne thought to herself but decided not to say it out loud.

'So why are you here' Evan asked, looking back at her.

'Me? Oh I was justâ€|walking andâ€|yeah' Elayne said trailing off, she was no good at talking to hot boys 'anywayâ€|I have somewhere to be soâ€|'

She turned to leave but heard Evan call to her 'see you around.'

Nodding she smiled awkwardly and continued walking, heading for a cafÃ© further down where she could get something to eat and meet up with Kayla.

As Elayne sat outside a cafÃ©, waiting for Kayla, she sighed, thinking about how she was going to break the news to people that she couldn't do surfing and swimming now.

'Hey sis' said Kayla as she finally arrived and sat down 'how is the new cafÃ© looking, when do you think it'll be open?'

Shrugging Elayne looked back over her shoulder in the direction she'd come, towards the new cafÃ© 'do you know a guy called Evan in our class?'

Kayla nodded 'yeah, he often sits behind us, why?'

'I saw him at the cafÃ©, he's helping to fix it up.'

Seeing Elayne's face Kayla grinned 'don't tell me you've never noticed sis.'

'What' asked Elayne frowning.

'Oh my god, you are so oblivious, he's had his eye on you all over the place for years, at least since we were 13; constantly staring at your back in classes, watching you surfing on beaches, he swims at the pool probably to watch you swim' Kayla said laughing.

Elayne smiling slightly she said 'really, well he won't be able to do

that nowâ€|not two of them anyway.'

Kayla nodded 'so what you want a drink?'

'Banana smoothie sounds good to me' Elayne replied, Kayla nodded and got up to go and get the drinks.

While she waited Elayne looked around, breathing in the salty sea air, looking across the road she saw a figure watching her from the boardwalk leading to the beach. She narrowed her eyes, was it the same guy from earlier?

'Ok' said Kayla, making her jump 'drinks are ordered' when Elayne didn't say anything she added 'something wrong sis?'

'Do you see that guy over there' Elayne asked pointing to the figure by the boardwalk.

Kayla looked and nodded 'yeah, do you know him?'

Elayne shook her head 'no, I can't even see his face clearly but I swear he's been following me since I got out of the water.'

'He didn't see you did he' Kayla said quickly.

Elayne gave her a sister a look, a _do I look stupid _look 'no of course not, I was careful.'

The two of them continued to look, uncertainly at the figure 'he gives me the creeps' Elayne said.

The figure turned and left, heading onto the beach, he seemed to have given upâ€|for now.

Roxie and Becka walked along the beach, keeping away from the water despite numerous cat calls by guys to try and get them in.

As two guys passed between them they both looked at Becka and whistled, Becka seemed to not even hear them but Roxie just stared as they walked off 'do you even have ears?'

'Huh' said Becka looking at her sister, clearly in a world of her own.

'You have some admirers' Roxie said jerking her thumb back at the guys.

Becka turned red 'ohâ€|that.'

'You are so oblivious, you get the attention of every guy within 20 feet' Roxie argued.

'So not trueâ€|really?'

Roxie nodded 'really, ever since you turned 15, don't you notice?'

'I'm a little preoccupied' Becka explained 'I was just thinking about my parentsâ€|my mom; I'd really like to learn about her.'

Roxie put an arm around her 'we'll find a way; we all want to know things.'

Just then a figure bumped into the two girls 'sorry' he said 'Iâ€|' but he seemed to have lost his voice.

The two girls didn't recognise him, he was tall, dark haired with an average tan and dark eyes 'no problem' Roxie said, stepping aside to keep walking but she stopped when he tapped her on the shoulder.

'Youâ€|I'm sorry, it's justâ€|you look like someone I used to know' the guy said still staring at them with amazement.

'Umâ€|sorry I don't know you' Roxie said 'you must be mistaken.'

That evening the four girls were over at Charlotte's, as they nearly always were, and were preparing for dinner. While Charlotte and Kayla worked in the kitchen the other three sat in the lounge room talking.

'So Kayla says you ran into Evan today' Roxie teased Elayne.

Elayne glared over at her sister 'umâ€|yeah, he was helping with the cafÃ©.'

'Can't believe you had no idea he liked you' Roxie replied laughing.

'My mind isn't always on boys, unlike some people' Elayne replied, trying to sound mature and serious.

Roxie laughed 'don't know why not, besides it is hard not too, with friends like you and a sister who is a magnet.'

Becka didn't have anything to say to that, she just went red and pretended she couldn't hear her sister 'look sis, despite what you think, I'm not good with guys, never have been.'

'Yeahâ€|that is obvious' Roxie smiled as she sat back.

A knock on the front door got their attention 'oh god if that is Sophieâ€|' Charlotte said sounding irritated at the very thought.

'No she would knock a lot harder' Roxie said casually.

Kayla left the kitchen and went to open the door she opened it and after a brief conversation with someone none of them could see a guy came inside, Roxie and Becka recognised him as the man from the beach. Elayne also suddenly had the feeling this was the guy that had been following her, he fitted the general shape and silhouette.

'My god' the guy said looking round at the four girls, and his eyes finally came to rest on Elayne 'youâ€|Emma.'

Charlotte came out of the kitchen and almost dropped the bowl she was carrying 'Ash! Oh my god, Ash I thoughtâ€|you're aliveâ€|you're hereâ€|'

Ash looked back at her 'Charlotte'hi'I'm very confused.'

Charlotte sighed, not sure how to explain this to him 'do you know about what happened?'

'I only just learned about it'I've been abroad, I came back as fast as I couldbut whoare they' he asked looking at the girls around him.

'Ash' Charlotte said 'meet Kayla the daughter of Cleo and Lewis, Roxie the daughter of Rikki and Zane, Elayne the daughter of Emma and an unknown manand Becka the daughter of Bella and Will.'

'Who was that last one?'

'Ah, I see you never met Bella and Will and either, well that makes two of us' Charlotte replied 'Bella was'she was one as well, if you understand what I'm saying.'

Ash frowned for a moment then blinked and said 'oh, that'sright.'

'You know the secret' Elayne asked frowning 'what they were?'

Ash nodded 'Emma told me, she and I were dating many years agobut we broke up and then she went sailing around the world with her family, so I never saw her again, by the time she came back I had left.'

'So you're not my father' Elayne said, slightly sad.

Ash shook his head 'no, I wasn't even aware the girls had kids.'

'Why were you stalking me earlier' Elayne asked, frowning slightly.

'I'm sorry about that, I just didn't know what to think I saw four girls, three looked almost exactly like friends of mine from years agoit just made no sense; I knew they were'different and had powers so perhaps it was still themI just wasn't sure.'

Charlotte looked around at the girls 'well I feel I can trust you Ash, the girls are mermaids now as well but it needs to be kept a secret can I count on you to help us with that?'

Ash nodded 'of course, anything I can do to help just let me know.'

6. Chapter 6

Chapter 6: Opening Night

The next couple of days pass smoothly and Charlotte happily talks with her old acquaintance, Ash, while preparing lunch for the girls, who are currently out and about somewhere.

She'd just finished explaining all she knew, trying to keep Ash up to date 'and so now here I am raising the two girlsâ€¦I wish I had been able to get Roxie and Becka as well butâ€¦Sophie is as stubborn as I am, more so even.'

Ash nodded 'well they seem happier with you and if this Sophie can't see that wellâ€¦I think it should be questioned if she deserves to take care of them, especially now that their older.'

It just then occurred to Charlotte; she had completely forgotten that Sophie was meant to send Roxie and Becka to someone by now, at the age of 16â€¦was she deliberately ignoring that?

'Do you think I could stay here for a few days' Ash asked 'just until I find my own place?'

Charlotte nodded 'of course, we have a spare room, you're more than welcome to stay, I'm sure Elayne in particular would like that, she seems to have taken quite a liking to you.'

Ash gave a small laugh 'yeah, now that the initial shock is over, but I can't blame her, I did know her mother in a way not many others didâ€¦Emma didn't let many people in.'

Charlotte didn't say anything, she just listened and watched Ash's quiet faceâ€¦she had never seen him so sad.

'I have to admitâ€¦this is quite a turn around for you' Ash commented 'I never expected you of all people to come back and do this.'

Charlotte wasn't sure how to react to that, her past self would have been offendedâ€¦but she'd grown since then, she sighed and nodded 'I know, but I'm all that is left, aside from you I'm the only person who knew about the secret, the only person who could have explained what these gifted children wereâ€¦their legacy, it must continue on and I also felt I just had to redeem myself.'

Elayne watched the others swim from a distance, she had told the captain of the team she had to quit but she missed the pool already; she'd barely been a mermaid a few days and the water problem was already getting to her.

She looked over at the benches by the pool and saw Evan, waving to her, he got up and came over 'hey, I thought you'd be here, nearly always are.'

Elayne frowned slightly, putting on a small sideways smile 'do you always watch me swim?'

'Uhâ€¦no, not always, I meanâ€¦' but he was clearly looking for excuses.

'Hey Evan' said a voice, the two of them turned to see the Kayla, Roxie and Becka coming towards them.

'Oh hiâ€¦your Kayla right' said Evan frowning in thought.

Kayla nodded 'yeah, this is Roxie and Becka, they'reâ€¦close friends of ours, like sisters really.'

Roxie put on a face 'let's not exaggerate.'

'How's the caf   doing' Becka asked, trying to lighten the mood.

'Oh yeah, that's right, knew there was a reason I came to talk to you, opening night is tonight, the caf   is all finished; the Juice Boost Caf  , come on down, we'll be having music and drinks it'll be great.'

'Sounds fun, I guess we'll see you later tonight then' Roxie replied, the girls turned and headed towards home.

As the girls walked they talked animatedly.

'Sounds great, finally we can see what they've been doing with the place' Kayla said.

'I wonder what band they'll have' Becka thought to herself 'I hope they aren't planning on karaoke, I hate that stuff.'

'Hey come on, karaoke is fun' Roxie said laughing 'especially for you, I mean you have a good voice.'

Elayne looked over at Becka 'you do?'

'Yeah, she's just shy, all talent no confidence' Roxie said casually.

Becka went red in the face 'I'll sing when I'm good and ready sis, not before.'

'Just don't let me near a microphone please' Kayla said sounding exasperated at the very thought.

'Why not' asked Roxie frowning.

'Oh trust me one song and it's unforgettable' Elayne said grimacing.

Becka frowned, clearly not getting it 'you any good?'

'No I'm awful' Kayla replied but Elayne shook her head laughing.

'Awful doesn't cover it sis, I don't want to be mean but it sounds like nails on a chalkboard' she said.

'Thanks' Kayla said sarcastically but she didn't mind, her singing was terrible and she knew it, there was no point in defending it.

As they approached their road Kayla stopped thoughtfully and the other three turned to look at her 'you ok' Elayne asked.

'Yeah' Kayla said 'I just want to go do something    kind of personal, I'll meet you guys at home ok.'

'You don't want us to come with you' Elayne asked frowning.

Kayla shook her head as she started walking away from them 'I won't

be long.'

'Where do you think she's going' Roxie said, more to herself than the others.

'No idea' replied Elayne 'come on, let's head home.'

Kayla approached the entrance to the Marine Park and looked up at the large gates; it had been a while since she'd been here. As much as she loved the place it was a bit of a water hazard so she had chosen to avoid it. However it had recently occurred to her maybe someone here remembered Cleo and could tell her about her.

She payed the entrance fee and went inside, she watched as the water skiing show went by on the water, where would she find someone who knew her mother?

She slowly started walking around the park, watching the rides, the dolphins, the pirate ship and then she caught site of the dolphin show. She moved to watch it from a distance, she couldn't get the best view as she didn't have a ticket for the stands, but she could see enough.

It was the young good looking guy with dark hair and tanned skin that was riding two dolphins that had really drawn her attention, but she needed to stay focused, she wasn't here to watch cute boys.

When the show was over she moved over the bridge and around to the restricted area to get a better look at the dolphin's pools and where the trainers were hanging out.

There were four trainer's she could see; two women, one man all wearing the same uniform for swimming with the dolphins and one older man who also had dark hair and tanned skin who seemed to be in charge of them.

'Excuse me miss' said a voice and Kayla jumped and almost fell forward into the water, fortunately she caught her hand on a tree.

She turned to see the young guy who had been riding the dolphins, still wet and wearing his gear 'this is a restricted area, staff only.'

Kayla put on a smile gave a small laugh 'I'm sorry, I just really loved the show and dolphins andâ€¦everything.'

He nodded 'well I'll let it slide but I suggest you leave now before you get in trouble.'

He reached out a hand to guide her away from the area but she backed away, fully aware of how wet he was 'it's ok, I know the way.'

He followed her to make sure she left 'I didn't mean to imply that you didn't' he said with a slight laugh.

'It's ok' said Kayla as they stood on the bridge 'soâ€¦you're a dolphin trainer?'

'Yeah, names Luke by the way, my dad used to be a trainer but now he

just teaches others' he explained.

'I'm Kayla' she replied, frowning in thought she added 'do you think I could speak to your dad, I just want to ask him something.'

Luke raised an eyebrow 'what about?'

'It's kind of personnel' she replied, rubbing her arm.

'Wellâ€¦I guess' Luke said 'give me a minute, I'll see if he has time to talk, next show isn't forâ€¦half an hour so we should be ok.'

Kayla waited on the bridge while Luke headed back into the restricted section; she assumed that other man with tanned skin must have been his father. She wondered if he would remember her mother, she had worked here after all.

After several minutes Luke returned with his father but upon seeing her he stopped dead 'Iâ€¦but that'sâ€¦it's impossible, my god' he said staring at Kayla in amazement.

Luke frowned 'what's wrong dad?'

'You look so much like herâ€¦Cleo, who are you?'

Kayla watched his reaction, she was growing used to people doing this now 'my name is Kayla, I'm the daughter of Cleo Sertori and Lewis McCartney.'

Blinking he looked her over again 'Cleo and Lewisâ€¦I had no ideaâ€¦I'm Laurie I knew Cleo very well and Lewis fairly well too.'

'So she worked here at the Marine Park, that is what I was told' Kayla replied 'I was told she loved dolphins and worked here.'

Laurie nodded 'yesâ€¦she umâ€¦well she started out serving ice creams but then she became an assistant dolphin trainer.'

Kayla blinked in surprise at that, Charlotte had never mentioned that 'really, butâ€¦' she trailed off, not sure how to continue, how had her mother managed that being a mermaid.

'She was a bit odd for a dolphin trainer' Laurie said with a small laugh 'never went in the water, but she really had a connection with the dolphins, as the years went on she became our best.'

Kayla was silent for a moment then she said 'thank you, for telling me all this I mean.'

Laurie nodded 'no problem.'

'You don't haveâ€¦um camera records of what she did do you? Any of her shows?'

Laurie scratched his head 'I might, but they're not supposed to leave the parkâ€¦as much as I'd love to help I can't, I'm sorry, I'd lose my job.'

Sighing in disappointment Kayla nodded 'I understand, thanks for everything' she turned and began walking away, she may as well head home now, this was as much information as she was probably going to get, for now at least.

She was just approaching the entrance to the park when someone grabbed her shoulder and she turned to see Luke 'hey, wait upâ€|you ok?'

Kayla nodded 'I'm fine, I was just hoping I would be able to find some record of my motherâ€|she died when I was so youngâ€|I never got to know her.'

Luke looked out over the main pool for a long moment, his back to her, watching the jet boat shoot past he then turned back to her 'seeing her on camera would really mean that much to you?'

She nodded, her head lowered, unable to meet his eyes.

He was silent again then finally said 'alright, I'll try my best, I can't promise anything ok, but I'll take a look around, and see what I can do.'

'Really' Kayla said looking at him with amazement 'butâ€|I don't want to get you in trouble.'

Luke shrugged 'don't worry, I'll be careful, if you ask me I think my dad wants to help you more than he is willing to say.'

Not sure what to say or how to thank him Kayla just gave a girlish shriek like noise, then realised with horror what she'd just done 'sorry.'

'It's ok' Luke replied 'I got to go, get ready for the next show, come back in a couple of days.'

With that Kayla headed out of the park, feeling much happier, almost a spring in her step.

By the time Kayla got home the others had finished eating and were lazing around doing various things.

Charlotte was sitting in her office quietly working and Roxie was lying across the sofa watching TV.

'Hey' Roxie said simply 'wandering when you'd get back.'

'Sorry but we kind of ate without you' Becka added from her place on the opposite sofa.

Kayla shrugged, she didn't mind, nothing was going to spoil her happy mood 'no problem, I'll just make myself something' she said going to the kitchen.

Becka raised her eyebrow 'you sound happy, where did you go anyway?'

'Marine Park' Kayla replied simply.

'Why' Roxie asked, not bothering to shift her eyes from the screen.

As she spread honey over two pieces of toast she Kayla said 'well I suddenly thought, if my mom worked there, maybe someone remembers, turns out someone does, did you know she was a dolphin trainer there.'

'Who was a dolphin trainer' asked Charlotte as she came out of her office and passed by the girls.

'My mum' Kayla replied 'how come you never told me that?'

Charlotte looked surprised 'wellâ€|I didn't know, it must have happened after I left.'

Roxie shrugged 'makes sense.'

'This guy Luke, he's going to try and get me the video tapes of her shows' Kayla said smiling.

'That's awesome' said Becka 'wow I'm so happy for you, I wish I could find some information on my mother.'

There was a silence and then Roxie said 'soâ€|this Luke guy? What was he like?'

Kayla turned red 'Iâ€|umâ€|I wasn't really paying attention to that.'

Snorting Roxie and rolled her eyes to show what she thought of that 'yeah right.'

Looking around Kayla decided this was probably the best time to try and change the subject 'umâ€|where's Elayne?'

'She and Ash went down to the beach' Becka explained.

'They're getting on well' Kayla said thoughtfully, she didn't mean to sound envious but she was a little, she missed her sister's company.

Charlotte walked over to the window and looked out at the beach 'it isn't as easy for Ash as he says, he understands Elayne looks to him for answers about her motherâ€|but for himâ€|he looks at her and he sees Emma.'

Ash and Elayne walked along the beach, heading for the far side, that was more deserted and secluded.

'Ash' Elayne asked 'could you tell me about the first time you met my mother?'

Laughing slightly Ash said 'oh what a story that is; I was working at a ranch, teaching people to ride horses.'

'My mum came for a lesson' Elayne asked laughing.

'No' replied Ash 'Eliot came for lessons, big sister was just there to look after him' Ash smirked.

'Did you like her straight away?'

Ash had to think about that one 'no, don't get me wrong she was a pretty girl but she was stubborn, convinced she knew how to ride a horse, that sort of thing. But she grew on me rapidly.'

'Did she like you?'

'Oh I think so, not that she'd ever admit it' Ash replied 'she was in utter denial for a long time.'

Elayne laughed 'wow, so when did you guys get together?'

The two of them walked around some rocks, off the main beach and into a small deserted cove.

'Not for a while later' Ash said 'the caf   where Emma worked needed a new manager and I got the job, problem is Emma wanted it too, causing a lot of tension between us for a while.'

Elayne smiled 'I can imagine that, Charlotte says I'm a lot like her, and I can tell you that would annoy me.'

Ash nodded 'well we went through an awkward patch, I tried to make too many changes which backfired on me and Emma ended up being right about some of them, so we settled for halfway.'

'Then what?'

'Then I decided to ask her out' Ash said 'I think it was the "out of the blue" approach that won her over.'

'The caf   you guys worked at   was that the JuiceNet' Elayne asked curiously

Ash nodded 'yeah, hey I hear you girls are going to its re-opening tonight, sounds fun.'

Elayne nodded 'should be.'

'So   can I see your mermaid form' Ash asked curiously giving her a friendly poke in the shoulder.

'One last question first, why did you and Emma break up?'

Ash sighed, looking down at his hands, then out at the ocean, his hair blowing in the ocean breeze 'well aside from the fact her family were going to go traveling round the world   I don't know, we just lost that spark. I was convinced that we would make up when she came back, but then I had to leave too. If it helps we broke up on a friendly note.'

Elayne nodded 'it does help; it's nice to know you were still friends and you're still loyal to us.'

Helping her onto her feet Ash said 'ok, come on now, cheer up, show me what you look like as a mermaid.'

Elayne sighed and went to the water, letting the low tide run over

her ankles, the water rushed over her body and then she was a mermaid. Ash's reaction to the new look was surprising but flattering.

He looked amazed by the beauty of her blue hair addition along with the usual tail.

'Wow' he said 'it's been years since I've seen it and clearly you've become something even more beautiful.'

As the sun set and the evening approached the girls prepared for the opening night party at the Juice Boost.

'Umâ€|there is one problem we have to think about' Elayne said 'partyâ€|drinks and the Juice Boost is near the water too.'

Roxie gave a groan 'yes we know, be careful of water, we're not stupid.'

'Elayne is right though' said Charlotte who stood in the doorway of their room watching as the four girls finished adding the last of their make-up and eyeliner 'this is the first time you girls are going to be in real danger of being exposed and I won't be around to help you this time either; be aware of your surroundings, of each other and be ready to leave or help each other out at a moment's notice.'

'But what ifâ€|' Becka was about to say but Charlotte cut her off.

'Nothing is more important than hiding your secret Becka, not boys, not even your reputation, myself and the girls had to do some ridiculous sometimes but it is worth it' Charlotte, that wasn't entirely true, it was mostly the girls that had done thatâ€|but there were times when she'd had to lie and stuff as well.

'Don't worry, we'll be careful' Kayla said as she checked herself over and then looked round at the others. She was wearing a deep purple dress and her hair was tied back in an elegant but simple ponytail.

Roxie was sticking to jeans, even a fancy night out wasn't going to convince her to wear a dress. She also had a black tank top with golden writing and a red sleeveless top over it.

'You look way too casual sis' Becka said looking at Roxie's clothing.

'I'll wear what I want thanks' Roxie simply replied 'besides it's not what you wear but who's wearing it'

Becka wasn't sure she agreed but said nothing; she was wearing a dress that was a mixture of white and deep navy blue, the blue fading from navy to white as it made patterns across the dress.

Although Elayne had also chosen to just go with jeans she had more jewellery, make up and the clothes themselves just looked a little moreâ€|flashy, making them perfect for occasion.

'Alright then' said Charlotte 'you girls have fun ok, and be

careful.'

As the four girls approached the crowded Juice Boost, the sound of music filled their ears and they moved to the doorway to head inside.

'Well hi, I was wondering when you girls were going to show up' said Evan from where he stood by the entrance.

'You were waiting for us' Roxie asked frowning.

Evan laughed 'no, I'm doing meet and greet, once it settles down out here I'll see you inside.'

They nodded and went inside, the place looked great, if there were usually tables most of them had been moved for tonight but the booths built into walls looked comfy and spacious. There was a bar loaded with drinks, fruit and all the usual equipment. Next to the bar there was a stage where the band was set up.

Kayla didn't recognise the band or the music, leaning in to Becka she said 'you know the band?'

Becka shook her head 'no.'

'What do you want to drink guys' Elayne asked looking round at them as they tried to avoid getting crushed in the see of people.

Roxie shrugged 'I'm ok right now, but I think we should grab a booth, standing is going to be hazardous if you get my drift.'

Looking round at the people dancing and talking with their drinks it was pretty obvious what she meant 'yeah' said Becka 'good call, I'll find us a place' and she headed off into the crowd.

The girls got drinks and found a booth and took turns, one sitting while the other three danced, socialized or both. Kayla was actually all too happy to sit more often though, she was not much of a dancer and highly insecure when it came to the whole dancing thing.

When Elayne was taking her turn resting Evan came over 'hey, can I sit down?'

'Sure' she said smiling.

'So what do you think of the place' he asked gesturing round.

Elayne took a swig of her banana smoothy, through a straw, and then said 'umâ€¦it's real nice.'

'We didn't change the general structure much from when it was called Rikki's' Evan said 'bar is still in the same place, office and so is the stage but we re-modelled the outside and walls of the inside, the boothsâ€¦'

Elayne nodded, trying to sound interested but in all honesty it wasn't that interesting to her 'sounds interesting.'

Evan raised an eyebrow 'am I boring you?'

'No' she said far too quickly.

Evan laughed 'I'm sorry, so how have you been, I heard you quit the swim team, how come?'

Searching for a good excuse Elayne finally said 'swimmer's ear.'

'That's too bad, you know I hear that isn't the first time a really talented swimmer has quit that school's swim team' Evan said casually.

Elayne gave an overly casual, slightly awkward laugh 'reallyâ€¦imagine that.'

Mercifully Becka chose that moment to come over 'hi Elayne, wow I'm exhausted' she said sitting down next to her 'what you guys been talking about?'

'Nothing much' Evan said, his face brightening up again 'just getting to know one another, you like the new place?'

Becka nodded enthusiastically 'I love it, I think we should make this our new caf   of choice don't you Elayne?'

Elayne didn't say anything; she just got up 'I'll be right back, just going to the bathroom.'

Watching her go Becka said 'what's up with her?'

Shrugging Evan watched her go 'no idea.'

'Whose the band playing here tonight by the way' Becka asked 'they're pretty cool, but I've never heard of them.'

Evan turned to look over at the group, then back at Becka 'just a local group I think, no one famous, we can't really afford that yet, we hired them from a local place I know that much.'

'I'm actually really into music and stuff' Becka said shifting her strawberry smoothy over from where she had left it and taking a drink.

'Can you sing' Evan asked curiously.

Becka nodded 'yeah but uhâ€¦I get kind of nervous in front of crowds.'

'Well' said Evan thoughtfully 'take this card' he pulled out a small card from his pocket 'that's where we hired the band from, if you change your mind try looking them up.'

Becka looked at the card, it was just a name and an address, it wasn't far from here 'thanks.'

'No problem' he replied smiling.

Just then Roxie came over 'hey guys, you want to dance Evan?'

Evan started to shake his head but she grabbed his hand 'come on, I'm

not taking no for an answer.'

Becka watched her sister and Kayla dance in the crowd as she continued to get her breath back and drink down her smoothy. Evan really wasn't that great a dancer, he was awkward and insecure on the dance floor and it showed.

Before long Kayla came to sit down 'well at least I'm not the only one who looks silly out there' she said with a smile 'where's Elayne?'

'She went to the bathroom, but she has been a while' Becka said.

'Maybe I should go check on her' Kayla said thoughtfully.

Becka shook her head 'no its ok, I'm headed that way anyway.'

She moved through the crowd and over to the girl's bathroom, once inside she saw Elayne just leaning against the far wall 'hey, you ok?'

'Not really' Evan just said some stuff, kind of bothered me, that's all' Elayne replied.

'What stuff' Becka asked curiously.

But Elayne didn't seem overly up for talking about it.

'You want to go back out there' Becka asked sympathetically.

'No' but I suppose I can't hide in here for ever' Elayne replied, the two of them headed back out, into the noise and flashing lights.

The night went on and the girls managed to keep clear of any dangers; they danced, they talked and they enjoyed the general atmosphere of the party.

It was around 10:30 when the four girls were outside the café talking, standing near the jetty, when Evan came up beside them, they hadn't seen him much since the talk earlier, guess he'd been busy helping out.

'Well hello again, you girls thinking of heading home?'

Kayla shrugged 'probably yeah, fairly soon at least, why?'

'No reason, just curious, I have to stay behind and help clean up of course, so I'll be here until it finishes' he didn't sound overly pleased about that.

'But you are getting paid right' Roxie asked.

'Oh yeah, I certainly wouldn't be doing it otherwise' Evan replied laughing.

There was a silence for several minutes, while the girls talked amongst themselves and Evan just stood there, looking out over the

water and sipping his drink but then he finally added 'umâ€¦hey Elayne, do you think I could speak to you a momentâ€¦just you?'

The other three looked at Elayne then each other 'I'll be fine' Elayne muttered to them and the girls moved away though not far.

'I hope I didn't say something to offend you earlier' Evan said 'because if I didâ€¦'

'No you didn't' Elayne said awkwardly 'it's fine, we're fineâ€¦really.'

He nodded 'ok' he was probably about to say more but just then a couple of morons stumbled out of the cafÃ© and into him causing his drink to go all over Elayne.

_Oh crap _thought Elayne instantly _what do I do, where do I go, I'm right out in the open, think, don't just stand around, why have I frozen._

All this and more ran through her mind in less than ten seconds, fortunately the others must have seen what had happened, she felt someone shove and pull her and before she knew it she was in the water. She looked over to see Kayla beside her, also a mermaid, the two of them shot off underwater quickly.

They finally stopped at the moon pool and Elayne looked at Kayla 'what happened back there?'

'Well you just froze, so I grabbed you by the arm and we leapt into the water, meanwhile Roxie and Becka drew everyone's attention back to the cafÃ©â€¦at least I hope they did' Kayla explained, rubbing water off her face.

Kayla's hair was a deep violet as a mermaid but also had some remaining strands of her natural brown hidden in there.

'So what now' Elayne asked 'should we head home?'

Kayla nodded 'probably the best idea' with that the two of them dived under again and headed back to the shore near their house, at this time of night it would hopefully be deserted.

(Note to Readers: Thank you for all the reviews I have received. For those of you following the story, sorry this last chapter has taken so long but I am writing many things and so I have to prioritize. The more reviews and more detailed feedback u give me the better, for I will feel more inclined then to continue this story first above others I am working on.)

7. Chapter 7

Chapter 7: In Deep Water

Elayne was woken the next morning by the sound of her mobile beeping, telling her she had a text message, she opened it to see it was from Becka.

'_Hi, no one saw you; did you guys get out of there ok?'_

She texted back a quick simple reply saying 'yeah' and 'thanks' then put her phone back on her bedside, yawning. She looked over at Kayla, still fast asleep, she slept like a log.

Deciding that she may as well get up, she headed downstairs to get some breakfast, Charlotte was already up, as she often was and was sitting reading the newspaper 'morning, you're up early.'

Shrugging Elayne went to the fridge to get the milk; she got herself a bowl, spoon and cereal and sat down at the table.

'How was the party?'

'Umâ€¦it was good, the place looks real nice, music, good juiceâ€¦' she wasn't sure what else to say so she trailed off.

Charlotte smiled 'any cute boys?'

Elayne went red 'umâ€¦someâ€¦I'd rather notâ€¦you aren't going to make me go there are you?'

Charlotte laughed 'only if you want to, just know I'm here if you want to talk.'

'Where's Ash' Elayne asked curiously, looking around for any sign of him.

'Out job hunting' Charlotte replied 'he'll be back for dinner.'

Noise upstairs signalled Kayla finally waking from her slumber 'sounds like Kayla's finally returned to the land of the living' Elayne joked.

Charlotte smiled 'oh that reminds me, I've got shopping to do but tell your sister that Kim and Don rang, it's about time she go and see them again, besides there is plenty of old stuff of Cleo's there that might interest her.'

Elayne nodded 'right, no problem' as she munched at her cereal.

Charlotte got up and headed off, probably to get ready to go out to the shops.

By the time Kayla finally came downstairs and had breakfast it was almost 11:00 but Elayne didn't really mind, it wasn't like she had much else to do.

'Hey' said Kayla 'why are you just sitting around?'

'Well I had a message for you, I had to wait for you to finish taking forever' said Elayne sarcastically.

Kayla stuck her tongue out at her 'I don't take that long, besides it's a weekendâ€¦did you tell Charlotte about what happened?'

'Nope, why bother, no big drama, no one saw anything, Becka texted me this morning' Elayne replied, waving it aside 'we don't need to worry

her with a simple mishap like that.'

'Yeahâ€¦I guess' Kayla said but she didn't sound so sure 'so what was this message?'

'Your Aunt Kim rang' Elayne said, putting on a face, she wasn't overly fond of Kim.

Kayla put on a wide eyed face 'oh god, yeah, I totally forgot, it's been ages since I saw her and Grandpa Donâ€¦I missed the last couple of times due toâ€¦well' Elayne didn't need to be told. Both the previous times had been cancelled for personnel reasons and the time before that she had had an incident with her powersâ€¦so that had been cancelled too.

Elayne nodded 'I know, they haven't seen you properly for a long timeâ€¦you will have a fair amount of explaining to do.'

'Well it's only two years really, they were there at my 14th birthday party, when I got my powers' replied Kayla trying to sound rational.

'And thank god Charlotte managed to stop them seeing anything' Elayne said laughing in exasperation.

Kayla nodded 'so what are you going to do with your day, I feel kind of bad leaving you here by yourself.'

'Oh don't worry, I'll call up Becka and Roxie, hang with them, maybe go to the cafÃ© or if all else fails just go and swim in the ocean, after all it's what we doâ€¦us mermaids' Elayne said smiling.

'Alright then, well I better get going, I'll see you later ok' with that Kayla headed out the front door.

Kayla arrived at her grandfather's house about 20 minutes later, she saw Kim's car parked outside, Kim spent most of her time here nowadays, when she wasn't busy doing her own things she was here taking care of Don. At least that is what Charlotte said, Kayla had to take her word for itâ€¦Kim had never struck her as the type to be overly caring for others though, even for her own father it would only go so far.

She went up to the front door and rang the doorbell and soon after Don answered the door 'Kayla' he said a smile spreading over his face, he still looked fairly young considering his age, but there were more age lines than she remembered and his hair was greying 'it's nice to finally see you again, feels like it's been forever.'

Smiling Kayla gave him a hug 'I'm so sorry grandpa, things just kept coming up, you know how it is sometimes.'

Don nodded 'yes, I suppose, well you're hear now, come on in, would you like anything to eat or drink?'

Kayla followed him into the lounge, looking round, it hadn't changed from what she could tell, a picture of Kim and Cleo instantly caught her attention on one of the small tables 'no, I'm fine

thanksâ€|where's Kim?'

'Oh she's aroundâ€|somewhere' Don said vaguely, sitting down 'probably upstairs, if she's not fussing over me she's often talking to someone or other on her phone in her roomâ€|reminds me of the old days a lot.'

Nodding Kayla sat down as well and said 'so how are you, are you still working?'

Don nodded 'not as much as I used too, not so many hours but I do love my fishing work and I don't see a point in giving it up until I really can't do it anymore. How about you, what have you and the girls been up to?'

Kayla shrugged 'not much, school, the usual.'

'How are your grades' Don asked 'Charlotte making sure you stay on top of things?'

'She always has grandpa, you really need to trust her, she has devoted herself to raising us well, you should be grateful' Kayla replied trying not to sound too irritable, she knew Don just meant well, but he was always a little hard on Charlotte.

Raising his hands Don said 'I do, she has done very wellâ€|I just wishâ€|'

'What' asked Kayla frowning slightly.

'I just wish your mother was still around to see all thisâ€|Charlotte and her never got along, even I could see that and Kim has told me as much; it'd be nice for her to be able to see what Charlotte's doing now' Don explained.

Kayla was silent for a moment, she looked at the picture on the table again, then back at Don 'I like to think she is, watching I mean, somewhere. By the way, I spoke to a guy called Laurie at the Marine Park, he said Cleo was a dolphin trainer, is that really true?'

Don nodded 'oh yes, and a real good one at that, not sure how but she was amazing, she was one up untilâ€|well until the end.'

A voice made both of them jump and they turned to see Kim coming downstairs 'yes, my sister, the great dolphin trainer; wondrous, amazing and beautiful.'

Don laughed 'you know I love you just as much Kim, no need to be like that.'

Kim didn't reply, she just looked at me and finally said 'hi, long time no see Kayla, how've you been?'

'Fine, you?'

Kim shrugged 'busy, I have some things upstairs you might be interested in, care to come and have a look?'

Deciding that it couldn't hurt to try and bond with her, Kayla got up and followed Kim back up the stairs, they passed her bedroom and

headed for a room at the very end of the hall 'this is Cleo's old room, got a bunch of old stuff in here that mightâ€¦interest you' Kim said and she opened the door, gesturing for Kayla to go in first.

Once they were both inside Kim closed the door, Kayla couldn't quite shake the feeling of slight foreboding, Kim was her aunt, why was she so worried but something about her blocking her path to the doorway made her a little nervous.

'Something wrong' Kim asked sounding way too innocent.

'No, nothing's wrong' Kayla said, turning to look around the room she said 'soâ€¦all this was my mum's?'

'Yup' replied Kim 'and if you want any of it you can have it, dad and I have no use for it.'

Kayla raised her eyebrow at Kim 'there is nothing here you want?'

'Trust me if there was, I'd have taken it by now' Kim replied with a sarcastic smile 'me and my sister rarely had things we both wanted, the odd top here or thereâ€¦but no.'

Kayla moved around the room while Kim leaned against the wall, watching her carefullyâ€¦almost like a hawk, watching what she looked at and picked up.

After what felt like hours but was probably only half an hour of this Kim said 'you knowâ€¦I always wondered some things about my sisterâ€¦things never added up.'

Kayla looked at Kim 'oh yeah, like what?'

'Well firstâ€¦her fear of water I mean at first ok I get it, some people just don't like waterâ€¦but then I saw her leap into water on more than one occasionâ€¦and then on others she was so scared she made me do the dishes' Kim said.

Kayla listened intently but pretended that she was barely interested and more interested in a box of clothing.

'And then of all places she gets a job at water central, the Marine Park and as time goes on she becomes the best dolphin trainer they've ever knownâ€¦I'm not stupid, something isn't right about that' Kim continues, ranting on.

Not sure what to say, without giving anything away Kayla just kept quiet.

'She and her friends had to have more secrets than anyone else I knew and as her sister I thought she could have told me, but no she just keeps lying to me, to dadâ€¦to everyone' Kim said irritably.

'What's your point' Kayla asked, hoping Kim would drop this and just pass it off as something to leave in the past.

There was a long silence and then Kim said 'I found something once, a diary, my sister claimed she just used it to re-write a fairy

taleâ€|but it would explain everythingâ€|'

Kayla laughed 'explain what exactly, what are you getting at?'

'Dad said my sister had an affinity for water, the dolphins and everything, I think he was right' Kim explained.

'You don't have an affinity for water by staying out of it' Kayla said but she wished she hadn't said that, she was just adding wood to the fire that was Kim's obvious obsession.

Standing up Kayla said 'I'm going to go to the bathroom, where is it again?'

'Second door, just by my bedroom' Kim said casually.

Kayla quickly left the room and breathed out, this is not good; Kim knows way too much, how could her mother have written a diary about being a mermaid, that was soâ€|careless.

Not focusing on where she was going she past the bathroom and entered Kim's roomâ€|the sight that awaited her was not pretty; newspapers everywhere, photos too, pictures of her mother and the other three girlsâ€|no evidence that she had any idea what they were but it was clear she had been spying on them for some time.

Kayla looked back at the door to make sure Kim wasn't coming then walked over to the desk, endless paper scribbled with lists of odd occurrences and a chart for each of the four girls and what occurrences had been seen with each of them.

She was just about to leave when she saw a small black box on her desk; she opened it to find a silver locket inside with a small amethyst stone in it. The locket could open but whatever had been inside, a picture maybe, was gone.

Kayla walked back out into the hall and back to her mother's room, forgetting about the bathroom, she was certain this locket had been her mother's, Charlotte had told her about it once. She slipped it into her back pocket, hiding it from view.

Kim was by the window as she returned 'heyâ€|so, see anything you like' she asked gesturing round at the room of clothes and other objects.

Kayla sighed, biting her lip 'well maybe one or two things, that picture of her and my dad is nice.'

'Alright' said Kim, sounding tired 'I'm not going to beat around the bush anymore, I know that my sister kept secrets and I know that Charlotte is the only person who didn't die in that accident that was in on them.'

'I honestly have no idea what you're talking about' said Kayla frowning, she was actually quite proud of her bit of acting she almost sounded sincere, but it clearly hadn't fooled Kim.

'Look, I just want to know, my sister never was honest with me, no matter how hard I tried to be nice, even when I got older she still never let me in' Kim said 'do you know how that feels?'

Kayla sighed 'did it ever occur to you that maybe just telling you and many others for that matter, just wasn't an option that she had sworn not to tell something, that she'd be breaking a promise to others if she did?'

Kim frowned 'so you do know somethingâ€¦it is about that diary I knew it, I knew I should never have let that theory go but I did because I trusted my sister and she lied.'

'Exactly how long have you had suspicions, my god this was years ago' Kayla said 'you're being ridiculous for someone of your age.'

Kim rolled her eyes 'I've always been suspicious but I just sort ofâ€¦let it go up and down I just ignored it and got on with things, if my sister wanted to be all secretive and weird fine. But then afterâ€¦well once you came along I was reminded of it all.'

'This is ridiculous, the diary, whatever, it was make believe just like my mother said' Kayla argued, crossing her arms defensively.

She didn't say anything in reply but Kim had a look in her eye Kayla didn't like one bit 'fine' said Kim 'I'll drop it, I'm just going to get a drink.'

She left the room; while she was gone Kayla packed a few things into a box, including the locket and the picture of her parents. She then pulled out her phone and tried to call the others but got no answer 'great' she muttered 'thanks guys.'

Kayla dumped the box on the bed just as Kim came back in sipping her glass of water 'sorry about beforeâ€¦it's just always troubled me' said Kim.

'It's ok' said Kayla though she really felt it wasn't ok at all, she was about to say more when she felt a sudden cold chill as Kim dumped the rest of her water on her back 'aaaagghhh KIM!'

Smiling wickedly Kim put the glass on the desk 'now if my theory is correct you only have a few secondsâ€¦am I right?'

Kayla couldn't believe just how selfish, self-centred and obsessed she was 'youâ€¦do you have any idea what you've justâ€¦' but her sentence was cut off as she turned into water and transformed, her mermaid form falling backwards onto the mattress.

'â€¦done' Kim asked finishing Kayla's sentence for her 'yes I think so, I have revealed, that you, like my sister was, are a mermaid' gesturing to her purple hair she said 'nice hair by the way.'

Raising her eyebrows at her Kayla said 'you don't seem overly surprised by the fact a mythical creature is lying on a bed in your house.'

'Oh I was, the first time I read that diary all this was real weird and disturbingâ€¦but I've had years to come to grips with the idea' Kim explained.

'What are you going to do' asked Kayla, worried deeply now for not just her but the others too.

'You and I are going to have a nice long chat, I honestly just want to know the truth, is that so much to ask' Kim said.

Kayla pulled herself up on her elbows 'look, my mother had her reasons and so do I, I can't tell you anything.'

'And why not, the cats out of the bag' Kim said 'or should I say fish out of the net?'

Kayla rolled her eyes 'oh ha ha, so funny.'

'I thought so' replied Kim smiling 'soâ€|how did this happen to you? Were you born this way? No waitâ€|you can't have been, I don't remember you reacting to water when you were with us.'

Utterly refusing to say a word, Kayla just lay there; she grabbed one of the shirts nearby and started drying herself.

'So you turn into a mermaid when you're wet, that much is clear and I guess you turn back when dry, judging by what you're doing' Kim said watching her.

Kayla said nothing, she just continued to ignore her and dry herself, she wasn't going to help her learn anymore.

Meanwhile, out at Mako, the three girls were swimming through the reefs, enjoying the freedom and speed their mermaid form gave them. After a while they went up onto the beach and dried off, turning back to normal.

'Where do you think Kayla is' Becka asked 'still at Don's house, she's been an awful long time.'

Elayne had been wondering the same thing, she took out her phone and checked it, there was one missed call from her but no message 'huh, she tried calling earlier but there's no message.'

Roxie and Becka moved closer to look 'strange, you think she's in trouble?'

'I doubt it, what trouble could she be in at their house' Elayne said.

Roxie frowned thoughtfully 'well there is Kimâ€|but I wouldn't call her troubleâ€|more annoying.'

'Yeahâ€|but Don's there, she isn't so bad when he's around' Becka replied.

Looking at her watch Elayne said 'we'll give it another half an hour, if we don't hear from her by then we head over there, ok?'

The other two nodded in agreement and they headed off along the beach.

Back at the Sertori's, things were only getting worse, Kayla had dried herself off and was now sitting cross-legged on the bed, she

would have tried to run for the door by now, if Kim wasn't leaning against it. Kim was her aunt, she was convinced that no matter how bad this could get she wouldn't sink so low as to go telling everyone. But that still didn't make the intimidating look she was giving her now make her feel any better, it made her feel like a mouse trapped in a corner.

'I'm not telling you anything Kim' Kayla said again 'I mean it, you've seen enough and you have to swear that you won't be telling anyone.'

Kim smiled 'oh is that what you're worried about, that I'm going to go spreading this aboutâ€|reveal your secret?'

'Yes' Kayla almost screamed in exasperation 'no one can know Kim.'

There was a long silence as Kim watched her 'alrightâ€|I'll keep it quiet, on one condition.'

_How did I know that was coming _Kayla thought to herself irritably.

'Just answer me three simple questions, tell me the truth and I promise I'll tell no one' Kim said, Kayla was about to say she couldn't promise that but Kim didn't give her the chance.

'Alright, firstly; my sister was a mermaid, that I know but I'm guessing so was Rikki, Emma and Bella' Kim asked looking at Kayla.

Kayla said nothing, refusing to answer, biting her lip, but it was pretty much answer enough in itself.

'Thought so' replied Kim 'I'm guessing these powers were passed on geneticallyâ€|am I right?'

Kayla again said nothing, she wanted to just try and shove past Kim, she was an utter failure as a mermaid, someone had already discovered her secret.

'I'm not telling you anything else Kim' Kayla shouted, standing up and moving very close to her aunt's face 'you need to get over the fact that my mother just didn't trust you with the secret, she had promises to keep and so do I.'

'It is not much of a secret anymore' Kim said unbothered by Kayla's outburst.

Losing her head completely Kayla felt something rise inside her and then there was a bang from somewhere in the house.

The two of them left the room, Kayla quickly grabbed the locket before she left, shoving it in her back pocket again.

The taps in the house were roaring with water, it was spurting in every direction; fortunately Kayla hadn't got too close. She sent the water at Kim, knocking her backwards, then quickly bolted out the door and ran as fast as she could, heading home.

Charlotte was just coming downstairs when Kayla bolted through the door panting and sobbing.

'Kayla, sweetie, what's wrong' asked Charlotte coming over to where she'd fallen to her knees.

But Kayla could barely get a word out 'Iâ€¦Kimâ€¦I'm soâ€¦so sorry.'

'What for' asked Charlotte 'come on' she pulled her off the floor and guided her over to the sofa. As Kayla stood up the locket fell out of the back pocket, seeing it Charlotte picked it up.

'Kaylaâ€¦where did you get this' Charlotte asked curiously holding it gently.

Pulling herself back together a bit Kayla said 'it uhâ€¦it was my mother's rightâ€¦but I found it in Kim's roomâ€¦I think she took it after sheâ€¦passed away.'

Charlotte sat down and put the locket on the coffee table 'yesâ€¦it was your mothersâ€¦the locket has a long history of ownership actually; first it was my grandmothers.'

Kayla looked at Charlotte with surprise 'but thenâ€¦shouldn't it belong to you?'

Smiling Charlotte shook her head 'noâ€¦it is part of a set; three were made, one for each girl, for each original mermaid.'

Looking at the locket Kayla said 'soâ€¦where are the other two?'

Charlotte shrugs 'who knowsâ€¦they could beâ€¦anywhere; I'll tell you the whole story later perhaps, when the others are here, it is something you should all hear. I want to know what happened to you, why are you so upset?'

'It's Kim' Kayla said irritably.

'What about her' asked Charlotte, her voice sounded calm but Kayla knew Charlotte wasn't fond of her.

Putting her face in her hands Kayla muttered something Charlotte couldn't understand.

'I'm sorry' Charlotte said, her eyebrow raised.

'She knows' Kayla repeated 'she knows aboutâ€¦us, mermaids, what my mom was, what I am and it's all my fault.'

Shushing her Charlotte crouched down in front of her and took Kayla's hands 'listen to me Kayla, firstly, I always knew Kim would be a problem at one point, I admit the fact she knew hasâ€¦surprised me but still Kim always has been devious.'

'But what if she tells someone' Kayla said 'she saw me; she threw water on me and everything.'

Charlotte sighed patiently 'she won't, not without proof at least and

she has none, only theories and her word, I've seen what happens when people cry mermaid around here before, they are called crazy, she won't want that.'

'I guess' Kayla said 'she said my mother wrote a diary about being a mermaid and that was where she first got the theory.'

Charlotte shook her head 'not one of Cleo's finest moments obviously but everyone makes mistakes.'

'Yeah well, that one is coming back to haunt us now' Kayla said irritably.

'They often do, still you found the locket and I think that is a big plusâ€|it is a valuable part of your parent's history' Charlotte said 'of mermaid history. Nowâ€|tell me everything and then I will be having a talk with Kim myself, one thing is wanting to understand, I know how that feels but she has to keep this secret.'

Kayla told Charlotte everything, from the moment she arrived to the moment she left the house, when she finally finished she sighed, worried that Charlotte would be angry.

'Wellâ€|what's done is done' said Charlotte finally 'your outburst wasn't intentional right?'

Kayla shook her head rapidly 'of course not, I would never do something like that on purpose.'

'Does she think it's just you or does she know about the others too' Charlotte asked.

'I don't knowâ€|she only seemed to really care about my mother and meâ€|but she knows Emma, Rikki and Bella were.'

Charlotte stood up straight 'she'll no doubt figure it outâ€|then I guess I have to just convince her to keep the secretâ€|not a lot more I can do.'

Kim was still sorting out the flooded house when Charlotte knocked on the front door. Kim opened the front door and let her in, glowering before returning to cleaning up the house.

'Look at this mess' Kim said loudly and angrily 'do you have any idea what this is going to cost?'

Charlotte didn't say anything, she calmly stepped inside and looked around, she couldn't deny Kayla had made quite a mess, but she'd worry about that later 'where's Don, did he see what happened, does he know anything?'

'Know what' asked Kim as she mopped away at the floor.

'You know full well what I'm talking about' Charlotte replied simply, her arms folded across her chest.

'No' said Kim 'he knows nothing, he wasn't here when this' she gestured to the all the water around her 'happened either, he left while the two of us were upstairs.'

'Good' said Charlotte 'now let's get something perfectly clear Kim, I know how it feels to want to understand, and to be left out but now that you know you can't tell anyone.'

Kim looked at Charlotte for a long moment 'don't you think there are some people who deserve to knowâ€¦like say Eliot?'

Charlotte shook her head 'the less people know the better, right now only myself, Ash and you know about it.'

'What about Sophie, she's raising two of them and has no idea?'

Charlotte shrugged 'to be honest it's hard to know what Sophie knows, she's a rather difficult person to read.'

Kim smiled 'I could try and find out.'

'No, she is stressed enough that the girls hang around with me, if she learns I have someone spying on her she'll just use that as an excuse to take the girls away from me' Charlotte replied.

Shrugging Kim continued to mop the floor 'fine, I won't say a word, but I'm only doing it for my sisterâ€¦Kayla and her friends haven't earned my trust yet.'

Pleased they had come to an agreement Charlotte nodded 'alright, and I'll talk to Kayla about thisâ€¦'she gestured around at the water 'but I do feel I need to say it was probably provoked.'

(Note to Readers: Thank you for all the reviews I have received. For those of you following the story, sorry this last chapter has taken so long but I am writing many things and so I have to prioritize. The more reviews and more detailed feedback you give me the better, for I will feel more inclined then to continue this story first above others I am working on. Also if I am able to give replies to your feedback to share opinions all the better.)

8. Chapter 8

Chapter 8: No Ordinary Girl

That evening the four girls sat eating dinner with Charlotte and Ash outside in the garden.

Charlotte and Kayla had just finished telling everyone the day's almost disastrous events.

'I can't believe Kim did that' Roxie said incredulously 'you're her niece!'

Kayla shrugged, she'd rather switch to another topic but she guessed this was going to go on for a while longer 'she just wanted to understand.'

'A feeling I know all too well' Charlotte said 'from that point of view, I can understand what drove her to such extreme measures.'

Ash sighed, shaking his head 'do you think we can trust her to keep

quiet?'

'She said she would, for Cleo' replied Charlotte 'but I honestly don't know how much that means to her, they seemed to have gotten closer since they were younger butâ€|'

Kayla nodded 'Kim said that to me as well, she said she and mom were quite close by the time mom died.'

'I still think we should keep an eye on her' Elayne added 'I don't trust that she'll keep the secret when the time comes to it.'

Ash frowned 'what do you mean?'

'I mean when the right opportunity shows itself, when the right offer is givenâ€|she'll talk' Elayne said.

Becka frowned 'and expose her own niece, she isn't that cold, she wouldn't.'

'I'm with Elayne' Roxie said 'I think we should watch her closely.'

Charlotte watched the four girls for a moment then said 'she offered to spy on Sophie for me you knowâ€|perhaps there was self-gain in that as well but that has to say something.'

No one had a reply to that they just continued to eat in silence for a few moments until Kayla finally said 'so Charlotte, about that locket?'

'What locket' asked Becka curiously.

Charlotte pulled it out laid it on the table 'Kayla found it in Kim's room, she took it from Cleo's belongings' Charlotte began to explain as the girls and Ash examined the silver locket with the amethyst stone.

'The locket is part of a set, three were made many years ago, one for each of the original mermaids or at least the earliest mermaids we know of; one of the mermaids was my grandmother' Charlotte continued.

All of the girls, save for Kayla, looked at her in amazement at this 'but that does not make the locket mine' Charlotte quickly added 'I once thought it did, just as I thought I had the right to inherit the mermaid powersâ€|but I was wrong. My grandmother and her friends Louise and Julia stumbled upon the moon pool by accident, no different than your parents.'

There was a long silence and then Ash said 'someone once told me, that those that go seeking power don't deserve it and were not meant to have it but those that stumble upon it by accident were meant to have itâ€|that is fate's design.'

Elayne looked at him, possibly wondering where he'd heard that.

Charlotte picked up the locket and handed it to Kayla 'this, by right of inheritance, belongs to you, you're a mermaid and your mother's

daughter' Kayla wasn't sure what to say.

'Thank you' she said at last and put the locket on, it fitted her very well.

'Soâ€|where are the other two' Becka asked curiously 'and how come there are only three?'

Charlotte shrugged 'the others could be anywhere by now, long before your parents died they stopped wearing these according to Sophie, I have seen pictures of your parents where they no longer have the lockets on.'

'That must have been after we left' Ash said 'as far as I can remember Emma never took hers off.'

'And as for there only being three locketsâ€|there were only three mermaids in the beginning' Charlotte said 'at least that we knew of.'

Frowning in thought Ash said 'perhaps where they lived beforeâ€|the accident, perhaps the lockets are there.'

'Whatever was in those houses would have been emptied out long ago' Charlotte said 'I won't pretend to know Emma and Rikki that wellâ€|but I think they left their lockets somewhere moreâ€|secret and well hidden' looking at the girls she added 'and no doubt intended to give them to you one day.'

After another long silence Charlotte said 'but we'll have to try and figure that out another time, Roxie and Becka you two should be getting home, Kayla and Elayne I think it's time you headed off to bed.'

The next day Becka woke up with a firm decision planted in her mind, after school today she would go and take a look at this building; it was, from what she could tell by the card, a local music agency.

'Hey Becka, you almost ready or what' came Roxie's voice from downstairs.

'Yeah, just a minute' Becka said as she finished putting on the last of her clothes and gathering up her school things.

She came downstairs to find Roxie waiting and Sophie standing by the kitchen, watching them 'you two head straight to school alright' she said to them, not looking at them.

'Yeah yeah' muttered Roxie, she handed Becka an apple 'here, eat this as you go, you haven't got time for anything else.'

Becka raised an eyebrow at her sister, like Roxie had ever cared about being on time for school. They headed out the front door and began walking 'I just wanted to get going, Sophie was bugging me this morning' Roxie said irritably.

'What about' asked Becka as she took a bite of the apple.

Roxie sighed 'she knows you know, that we sneak out and see the

othersâ€¦I think she knows about nearly every time.'

'Well, I guess she was going to find out sooner or later, she seems calm about it though' Becka said 'maybe she's just given up.'

Roxie shook her head 'she's not the type and there is something else I want to raise with her too.'

'What's that' Becka asked, frowning.

'Charlotte told me Sophie was meant to send me somewhere when I turned 16, and you too in factâ€¦but she hasn't so my question is why hasn't she and who is this person' Roxie asked.

Thinking silently Becka said nothing finishing her apple and tossing it in a passing bin.

Becka was just telling Roxie about her plan to go investigate the music agency after school when Kayla and Elayne joined them near the grounds of the school.

'Hey guys' Kayla said 'anyone nervous about being back at school now that we're well you knowâ€¦'

'It's a little unnerving' Elayne said 'you all said you can't participate in water sports anymore correct?'

All three girls nodded 'yeah' said Roxie 'not easy to explain that oneâ€¦probably looking at failing PE now.'

'We all are' replied Elayne 'unless of course we can find an alternative way to make up for it.'

Becka was about to speak but Roxie cut over her 'say Beach Volleyball and I will smack you over the head.'

'Why not, our parents did it' Elayne said 'whatever works right?'

Roxie made a face 'because firstly it is seriously sexist and degrading having us jump around in bathing suits, secondly it still contains possible water hazards thirdlyâ€¦' but she clearly couldn't think of a third.

As they continued towards the school Elayne rolled her eyes 'we don't wear swimwear, we wear sports clothes like usual but I suppose you have a point about the water hazards.'

The school bell rang and they rushed off towards class, getting lost in the sea of students as they all went their own ways.

As Kayla moved towards the classroom she saw a tall blonde girl she didn't recognise and pointed her out to the others 'is she new, I don't recognise her?'

'Yeah, maybe' Elayne replied frowning.

The blonde looked at them, frowning and giving them a distasteful look, she then flicked her hair and turned back to the girl she was talking to.

'Her name is Hannah Kent' said a girl from behind them, the four of them looked at her, 'she just transferred here from Sydney.'

'Huh' Becka said thoughtfully 'Kentâ€|why does that name ring a bell?'

'It should' the girl replied 'her mother is Miriam Kent, that big star in the fashion world.'

Roxie snorted 'so she's one of those girls huh?'

The girls looked over at Hannah again; she was tall with blonde hair and a moderate tan. Her body was slender like that of a supermodel and clearly had been well cared for its entire life.

'Come on' said Elayne 'we should get to class.'

Rolling her eyes Roxie smirked 'you're awful, what is it with you and work?'

'I just don't want to get in trouble' replied Elayne 'something wrong with that?'

'No, you just seem so eager to get down to work' Roxie replied laughing.

Elayne didn't bother to continue the argument, she turned and headed into class, Becka and Kayla followed her and Roxie reluctantly went as well.

They were just settling down into their seats when alarms started going off everywhere and the place was chaos, the teacher's attempts to calm the kids and tell them to slowly leave in an orderly fashion really wasn't working.

'What's going on' Becka said, her face looking worried.

Alarm sirens were sounding and the red lights were flashing round and round throughout the school 'attention; all teachers escort their students outside, all staff vacate the premises, this is not a drill.'

'That sounded like the principal' said Kayla as they were filed in line by their teacher.

Elayne nodded 'I think you're right sis, but I wonder what has happened?'

It didn't take long for them to find out, the hallway was littered with damaged stuff and the glass of their interior fish tank was looking dangerously close to breaking.

'Guys' Becka said, nodding to the fish tank nervously.

Roxie nodded 'yeahâ€|I know, let's just hope we get out before it breaks.'

There was another rumble throughout the school and that was all it took, the glass shattered and the fish tank water came out in a

roaring flood sending the four girls crashing back into the classroom.

'Quickly' Roxie said grabbing the door, slamming it shut and locking it 'shut the blinds!'

Fortunately it looked like the rest of the class had grabbed onto something and resisted the water.

The four of them turned into mermaids before they could shut both blinds but no one seemed to be around yet.

Kayla pulled herself over the second pair of blinds and pulled them down 'thereâ€¦great, now what are we going to do?'

'Relax' replied Roxie 'I can dry us all off.'

Becka looked around 'I don't know sis, this is a lot of waterâ€¦it's going to take more than a steam dry to get rid of this.'

'It may take a few minutes, but don't worry' Roxie grinned.

Another rumble shook the building 'ok, I'm still worried' Elayne said 'what is that?'

'Let's get out of here, then worry about that' Kayla said irritably.

Becka nodded 'I agree with Kayla.'

The four of them lay on their backs, silently while Roxie boiled away the water, gradually drying the entire room.

After several minutes Elayne said 'could you hurry it up, they might come looking for us any minute!'

Roxie glowered at her 'hey, I'm the only one who can get us out of this, might be wise not to irritate me.'

The room was finally dry and the girls felt themselves dry rapidly and then they became human again and pulled themselves to their feet.

'Alright, good, now we'll tell them we were unconscious ok, that is why we didn't go anywhere' Elayne said calmly.

They were just heading for the door when knocks came from it and three men, knocked it down, all dressed in fire gear 'there you girls are, come on we need to get you out of here, can you all walk?'

We nodded and they guided us out of the building to where the rest of the school was gathered out front. We looked back at the building, the source of the problem was pretty clear now; someone had set a fire in the upper floors.

We stayed with the school for as long as we had to, and watched as they got the fire under control and finally managed to put it out.

One of the firemen came over to the girls, looking between the four

of them 'you four ok? No injuries?'

Kayla nodded along with the others 'yeah we're fine, aquarium broke, knocked us unconscious.'

The fireman nodded 'well, you all seem ok, but I suggest you all stop by the paramedics before you leave the grounds, don't want to find out later you have a concussion or something.'

Elayne nodded 'what started the fire?'

'Still figuring that out' the fireman replied simply 'but needless to say I think your school will be out of action for a few daysâ€¦a lot of structural damage.'

Giving a small laugh Roxie said 'yeah, we felt that.'

Becka headed home with the others, the paramedics had given them all the ok and school had pretty much been cancelled for the next few days at the very least, probably more.

Suddenly remembering what she'd planned to do after school Becka stopped and pulled out the card from her pocket, noticing her stop the others looked back at her 'hey, something wrong sis' Roxie asked curiously.

'No' Becka replied 'I just remembered, I was going to go take a look at this music agency.'

Roxie grinned 'about time, you need to get yourself noticed.'

Turning red Becka stuttered 'wellâ€¦I was justâ€¦I mean I was only going to look.'

'Nonsense' Roxie said grabbing her by the arm, 'come on, lead the way, I'll come with you.'

'No you don't have toâ€¦' but Roxie cut her off.

'Of course I do, you need me to back you up, admit it' Roxie said jokingly.

Elayne and Kayla just watched silently as the two argued, they finally sighed and continued walking 'we'll see you guys later ok?'

'You're not coming' Roxie asked curiously.

Kayla looked back at them 'not unless Becka wants us to' she looked at Becka questioningly.

'I'll be fine' Becka said 'but thanks for offering.'

'Well I'm coming with you' Roxie said stubbornly.

Becka rolled her eyes and headed off, hoping her sister would give up and head home, she really wanted to do this alone.

Becka finally arrived at the address about forty minutes later,

having got lost a couple of times. The building was fairly small, squashed into a street but was at least three floors high.

It had glass double doors at the front, the kind you opened yourself not the automatic ones. The only really glamorous thing about the building were the neon letters over the entrance, likely to attract attention and business.

Taking a deep breath she walked up the steps and pushed open the doors, stepping into the reception area, it was a large and open room with a deep red carpet floor, some potted plants and numerous portraits on the walls. She had to admit, compared to the outside it was fairly flashy. Moving over to the large desk right in front of her she looked around, no one was at the main desk. She rang the small bell and waited, hoping someone would come.

Several minutes passed but no one came; she was just about to call out when a voice made her jump 'hey sis' and she turned to find Roxie walking in the door.

'You followed me' Becka asked irritably 'look I want to do this alone, can't you get that!'

Roxie raised her hands in surrender 'whoa chill' she reached past Becka and tapped the bell a few times 'I'll stay in the background, I promise.'

Becka sighed 'alright, you better' she tapped the bell once more and a voice rang out making them both jump.

'I hear the bell' it sounded like a woman and a rather irritable one at that.

A blonde middle aged woman stepped through from a back room and sat down in the chair behind the desk, looking up at them she said 'well, what can I do for you?'

'Um' said Becka awkwardly, what was she here for? now that she was here she had no idea what to say.

The woman looked at her, eyebrow raised 'sweety, we're very busy here, if you need something I can help but otherwise.'

Roxie raised her eyebrow 'busy, you were just lounging around.'

The woman narrowed her eyes at Roxie 'I was on my break; I suppose you were the one rudely ringing the bell.'

Before Roxie could reply with her smart mouth Becka said 'I wanted to talk with someone about possibly starting a music career.'

Roxie frowned at Becka in surprise 'really?'

The same thoughts seemed to be in the mind of the woman because she raised her eyebrow doubtfully 'do you have a name' she asked Becka.

'Becka' but then she hesitated, she didn't want to use the name Benjamin, firstly it was too personal for her, secondly she doubted

Sophie would like this and it would trace back to her in no time 'Becka Hartley' she answered and she felt Roxie cough and gasp behind her then rapidly tap her shoulder. She turned to her sister and Roxie was gently shaking her head to tell her "no".

The woman didn't seem to have noticed the reaction; she was typing at her computer 'do you have a demo disk of some of your work?'

'Umâ€|no' Becka said, realising now that probably seemed stupid.

The woman frowned 'well, I suppose I can ask if someone can do a sort ofâ€|initial interview with you, one second' and she walked off to the backroom.

Roxie pulled Becka close 'are you crazy, using your mom's name? Do you realise what kind of problems this might cause?'

'And do you realise how much worse it would be if Sophie heard about this' Becka replied.

Roxie sighed 'they are both pretty bad to be honest.'

The woman returned 'Mrs Wilson will see you Becka, room 3.'

Becka and Roxie headed down the hallway and knocked on the door with a small number "3" on it.

'Come in' came a voice from inside and the two entered.

Mrs Wilson was older than Becka had expected with brown hair that was greying, she looked up and saw the two of them 'my goodness' she looked at Becka 'you must be Becka Hartley and who is your friend?'

'This is my sister, Roxie' Becka explained, though she was more curious how she knew she was Becka.

Frowning she said 'sister, you don't look much alike.'

Roxie laughed 'we aren't, I was adopted into the family.'

Mrs Wilson nodded 'I see, I apologise, now let's get down to business, I understand you want to do music Becka?'

'Yes' Becka said 'singing primarily, I mean I can dance a little too but it's my voice that everyone keeps talking about, not to sound big headed.'

Roxie nudged her 'you're being modest as always, you're amazing don't hide it.'

Mrs Wilson smiled 'modesty, it is an interesting thing, people who are modest are usually better liked but don't always live up to their full potential. However more arrogant or pompous people go far but aren't as well liked.'

'Then I guess it depends what people value more doesn't it' Becka replied simply.

Mrs Wilson nodded 'indeed it does. Now I can discuss a few possibilities for you Becka but without a demo disk of your singing talentâ€|we can't really go very far.'

Becka nodded 'I understand.'

It was then some sort of realisation seemed to come over Mrs Wilson, she looked at Becka closely and then seemed to mouth her name silently.

'Something wrong' Roxie asked frowning.

'You aren't by any chance related to a Bella Hartley are you?'

Becka gaped for a moment then said 'Iâ€|umâ€|yes, she was my mother.'

'Your mother' Mrs Wilson said 'my goodness, so the child was a girl.'

'I'm sorry' Becka asked frowning at her.

Mrs Wilson sat up straight, taking a tissue from her box and dabbing her eyes 'it was the last time I saw her, she came here to officiallyâ€|end the contract with usâ€|she must have been at leastâ€|7 maybe 8 months pregnant.'

'Contract' said Roxie 'Bella had a contract here?'

Mrs Wilson nodded and stood up 'yes indeed, she came to us wanting to promote the songs she had been singing around the Gold Coast area since she'd arrived and so she made them into an album.'

She moved over to the right wall which was a large rack of CD albums with a CD player on one side and had books on the other. She searched through the CDs and finally pulled out one and handed it to the girls.

The album had a very beach, ocean and even some mermaid theme (kind of risky in Becka's mind) it had a beautiful picture of her mother on the front, she looked no older than maybe 18 or 19. The album itself was called "No Ordinary Girl"; it had such numbers as "Come Back To You", "I'm The Kinda Girl" and "Pretty Baby".

Roxie looked at Becka, eyebrow raised, she clearly thought such an album was risky as the songs gave away too much, but then again who would take songs seriously.

'Can we keep this' Becka asked Mrs Wilson curiously.

She nodded 'yes, it's yours, I heard about the tragic accident of course, by that time Bella was a famous singer, she may have done only one album but it had made her famous enough to get her on the news and get us on the news through her. So yesâ€|it all makes sense now, clearly talent runs in your blood.'

_Oh more than that does _Becka thought to herself but that was something she couldn't share with anyone.

'Why did my mother not continue music' Becka asked curiously 'I mean

if she had such talent?'

Mrs Wilson sighed thoughtfully 'Bellaâ€|she was amazing, she could have been great, I remember the day she walked in here like it was yesterdayâ€|but like I said before some are just modest, or do things because they love it not for the fame or moneyâ€|Bella was one of those.'

Becka looked at her mother's face on the album coverâ€|she could believe every word of it just by looking at her.

Becka walked out of the building, followed by Roxie, still staring at the album in her hands 'wow, we have to go show the others this' Becka said 'come on.'

When they arrived back at the house the others were just relaxing 'you'll never guess what we found out' Roxie said.

'What' Kayla asked curiously from her place of the sofa.

Becka put the album down on the coffee table 'look at this.'

Charlotte frowned picking it up and looking at it 'Bella made an albumâ€|about mermaids?'

Becka shook her head 'I don't think so, I mean it has the odd ocean reference but it's just music, no one would take it seriously.'

'Wow' said Elayne seeing the cover 'Bella was really pretty, can we listen to it?'

Charlotte stood up and took it over to the CD player, put it in and pressed play.

Her voice wasâ€|beautiful, it was like nothing Becka had ever heard, she wasn't sure how much she sounded like that, but her mother had been amazing. The main song "No Ordinary Girl" was certainly a secret description on her mermaid life but Becka doubted that anyone ever had taken it seriously.

'You do sound a fair bit like her' Roxie said to Becka 'your voice is slightly different I think, but otherwiseâ€|'

Kayla was looking amazed 'wow, that was like soâ€| moving and beautiful.'

'I see now what Sophie meant' Charlotte said 'Bella really was something special.'

Roxie frowned 'Sophie said that?'

'Oh yes, even she couldn't deny Bella was talented when it came to singing' Charlotte nodded.

Footsteps from the stairs drew their attention 'hey, what is that music' Ash came down the stairs.

'That would be my mom' Becka said with a smile 'we discovered she did

an album.'

Ash grinned 'huh, she's really good.'

The six of them spent the rest of the day listening to her music and talking about the various songs, in a sort of tribute to her memory.

(Note to Readers: Thank you for all the reviews I have received. For those of you following the story, sorry this last chapter has taken so long but I am writing many things and so I have to prioritize. The more reviews and more detailed feedback you give me the better, for I will feel more inclined then to continue this story first above others I am working on. Also if I am able to give replies to your feedback to share opinions all the better.)

9. Chapter 9

Chapter 9: Fish To Fry

When Roxie and Becka finally arrived home they were in such a cheerful mood they didn't even notice Sophie standing tall, firm and livid with anger at the opposite end of the living room.

'About time you two got back' she said, her voice low but menacing and icy.

Becka trembled slightly, she'd never seen Sophie look this angry or menacing before 'sorry weâ€|we won'tâ€|' but Sophie cut her off.

'Don't try to feed me that "we won't do it again" nonsense, I know where you go and that you have been sneaking out behind my back, I always have' Sophie snapped back angrily.

Roxie snorted 'yeah right, if you did then why didn't you stop us?'

She didn't give a reply to that, she simply stared back at them, then finally said 'I got a call from the school and naturally I heard what happened, you both alright?'

'Do you care' Roxie replied before Becka could say anything.

'Of course I do' Sophie yelled angrily and then she quickly calmed down again 'now, I think the two of you should get upstairs, worried as I was that doesn't excuse you sneaking around.'

Nodding Becka started heading upstairs but Roxie didn't move, she stayed in the hallway, glaring at Sophie 'sis, come on, leave it' she hissed at her but Roxie ignored her.

'I want to talk to Sophie about something' explained Roxie as she watched her walk into the kitchen, 'you go upstairs if you want.'

Sensing this was going to get bad, Becka headed upstairs, deciding to stay out the way.

Roxie moved into the kitchen and faced Sophie; she gave a look of surprise when she saw Roxie 'I thought I told you to go upstairs.'

'I want to talk to you about something' Roxie said 'can't I do that?'

Sophie looked a little surprised but shrugged 'alright, what is it?'

Crossing her arms across her chest Roxie took a deep breath, this could well turn into a big fight 'Becka and I are 16 now' she started.

'I am aware of this' Sophie said, sounding almost bored, like she felt Roxie was just messing with her.

'So aren't you forgetting something' Roxie asked curiously, she waited several moments, at first Sophie just stared at her frowning slightly but then a look of pure wide eyed fury came over her.

'You're not supposed to know about that' Sophie yelled angrily 'how did you evenâ€¦|you are in so much trouble.'

Roxie gave a small laugh 'what are you going to do? Send me to my room?'

Sophie grabbed Roxie by the arm and pulled her into her office, away from where anyone like Becka might hear 'I don't know how you found out aboutâ€¦|that but if you think you are free of me, you can forget it, I have my reasons for keeping you both and there is nothing you can do about it, either of you.'

'You can't do that' Roxie said angrily.

Sophie smiled 'why not, Becka is my niece, Zane and Rikki gave you to me and the only letter promising to change that, I disposed of, as far as evidence goes I have a right to you both.'

'Who was it, who was I supposed to meet? Tell me or I swear to god you will never see either of us again' Roxie said angrily almost on the edge of tears now.

'And you'd go where? To Charlotte's, that would be the perfect excuse for me to get her in trouble, taking in kids she has no right toâ€¦|they might even take the other two away from her as well.'

'She has adoption rights to Kayla and Elayne no different than you to me' Roxie yelled angrily 'you are the most evil person I know.'

Sophie smirked 'you'll find I have a reason for what I'm doing, just because it isn't clear to youâ€¦|but I sadly can't reveal anything to youâ€¦|yet, now go upstairs.'

She pushed Roxie out of the office and closed the door behind her, locking it.

Furious, Roxie bolted upstairs and into the room she and Becka

shared, Becka was sitting on her bed but instantly jumped up 'what happened, I could hear you guys from here?'

Although she was still half crying Roxie explained the whole thing, to her.

Meanwhile, downstairs, Sophie sat in the office frowning deep in thought. She was distracted by the sound of her phone ringing and she answered it 'yes?'

'It's me Miss Benjamin, I believe you and I should arrange a time to meet in person, discuss things moreâ€|thoroughly' said the female voice on the other side of the phone.

Sophie sighed 'only if you'll answer me some questions, things have become slightly moreâ€|complicated.'

'Nothing you can't handle I hope, I told you what you were dealing withâ€|and you made your decision to keep the girls, I'll answer what I feel is acceptable, is that enough?'

After a long moment of thought Sophie nodded 'yes, alright, where then?'

The next day Becka and Roxie slept in as much as possible and then went downstairs; Sophie wasn't around as far as they could tell.

Seeing a note on the fridge Becka picked it up 'huh, it says here she went out and will be back later.'

'Like I really care' Roxie said bitterly 'what should we do today?'

Becka shrugged 'I don't know, find out what the others are doing maybe.'

Nodding Roxie sighed as she sat down at the kitchen table and Becka joined her 'I still can't believe Sophie said all that.'

'Yeah well she did sis, deal with it, she was a devious woman and always was' Roxie said angrily.

Becka dialled Kayla's number and waited 'hey Kayla, what are you guys going to do today?'

After several moments Becka hung up the phone 'Kayla is going to go back to the Marine Park, see if that Luke guy has made any progress finding stuff on Cleoâ€|but Elayne will be around.'

Roxie nodded 'then let's go keep her company, it's not like there is much to do around here anyway.'

Sophie parked her car outside the address she'd been given, it was a small private residence, secluded further down the Gold Coast, in the opposite direction from Brisbane.

She moved up to the door and rang the bell, waiting patiently, when the door finally opened a woman stood there with long dark brown hair, a deep and lustrous chocolate colour 'ah, we meet at last

Sophie' she said smiling 'please, come in.'

Sophie stepped inside and followed her into the main living room and after the woman sat down she also sat down, sitting opposite her 'my name is Tayla Brooks and I presume you have some questions for me.'

Nodding Sophie frowned 'howâ€¦I mean, you told me what Becka and Roxie are butâ€¦how is it possible?'

Tayla laughed 'even I don't know the full story behind that, but I know who does.'

'Charlotte' Sophie answered, knowing she was right.

Nodding Tayla smiled 'indeed, she is the last of theâ€¦previous generation of mermaids.'

'Then how do you know about all thisâ€¦and if you have known why wait until now to tell anyone' Sophie asked.

Tayla's face hardened 'my grandfather knewâ€¦he'd seen one with his own eyes, had evidence tooâ€¦but he lost it and no one believed him after that, everyone made a mockery of himâ€¦my family have barely recovered from it as you can see, I live in thisâ€¦small house, my family used to be wealthy, my grandfather was obsessedâ€¦squandered the family fortune and spent his whole life on itâ€¦once he died my father and the rest of our family had to pick up the pieces.'

After a long moment of silence Sophie asked 'what was your grandfather's name?'

'Karl Brooks' Tanya replied 'he not only saw the mermaid, he was in love with herâ€¦her name was Julia but when he learned what she was he tried to expose herâ€¦but her two friends stopped him.'

Sophie looked stared at Tanya for a long moment 'and what exactly does this have to do with me and the girls?'

'Don't you see, for a start those girls would be worth a fortune and secondly it is my chance to prove everything my grandfather was saying; we expose them and my family will be renowned' Tanya explained.

Frowning in thought Sophie shook her head 'Charlotte won't let you get anywhere near them if she knows what you're up to.'

'But you can' Tanya said 'you need only expose them at the right time, then it doesn't matter if I'm there or not. I'll just show upâ€¦rather conveniently, after you expose them.'

Sophie frowned 'Charlotte doesn't trust me, I doubt she'll let me get involved with the girls and they don't much like me either after our recent arguments.'

'Then perhaps it is time you used some of that charm of yours I heard so much about, become their friend, Charlotte's one weakness is she believes in giving people second chancesâ€¦play that to your advantage' Tanya replied with sharp smirk 'vindication takes a lot of workâ€¦but it's what I live for now.'

Meanwhile Elayne, Roxie and Becka were sitting on the beach, though far from the water and talking about Sophie and Roxie's argument.

'She actually said those things' said Elayne with amazement 'your joking right?'

'No I'm not' Roxie argued back.

Becka put on a thoughtful expression 'maybe you just misunderstood her, I'm sure she had a reason for the things she said.'

Roxie glared at Becka 'don't defend her sis, I told you word for word what she said, she deliberately got rid of that letter, why would she do that?'

Becka shrugged 'I don't know but we don't know all the detailsâ€¦I just think we should try and keep an open mind.'

'Becka is right' Elayne said 'I'm not saying I like what she did, but we shouldn't be sinking to her level.'

Sighing Roxie gave in 'alright, but if she doesn't start to chill and back off soonâ€¦' she trailed off not sure how to finish that sentence.

Footsteps in the sand made them all turn and look over their shoulder to see Evan walking over to them 'hey girls.'

Roxie grinned 'hey Evan' she then gave a knowing look at Elayne.

'I was wondering, um, Elayne could I talk with you a moment' Evan asked awkwardly.

The other two girls tried their hardest not to smile; Roxie pretended to look out at the ocean, and Becka scratched the back of her neck in a nonchalant way.

'Yeahâ€¦I guess' Elayne said, she got up 'I'll be back in a minute.'

'Take your time' Roxie muttered.

The two of them walked a little way along the beach then came to a stop 'so how have you been' Evan asked casually.

'Fine' Elayne replied.

'Weird about the school fire huh' Evan replied, giving a small awkward laugh.

Elayne nodded, looking down the beach, her hair whipping in the wind, she could practically feel the awkwardness in the air.

After a few seconds of silence Evan finally said 'ok, I'm not going to beat around the bush here.'

_Here it comes _Elayne thought to herself, bracing for the awkward moment.

'I came to ask you about somethingâ€¦it's reallyâ€¦odd' Evan began.

Elayne frowned and turned to look at him she wasn't sure "odd" was the word she'd use if she were him.

'You know how you weren't the only swimmer to leave the swim team' Evan continued.

Elayne groaned 'oh god, not this again, let it go Evan.'

'Why' Evan replied quickly 'is there something you don't want me to know?'

'In case you didn't take the hint last time, I didn't want to talk about it, it's bad enough that I can't swim much anymore without being reminded about it' Elayne said, she began to turn and walk away but what he said next stopped her dead in her tracks.

'Emma Gilbert' Evan said 'she was the other girl who left the swim team in almost the exact same way and for the same reasons you areâ€¦wasn't your birth name Elayne Gilbert?'

For a couple of seconds Elayne stuttered her mouth half open but then she just kept walking 'I'm not talking about this Evan, drop it.'

She returned to the girls, still feeling Evan watching her, 'something the matter' Becka asked, clearly her face showed more than she thought.

'We'll talk more inside' said Elayne 'come on' the three of them headed back to Charlotte's house.

Once the three of them were settled in the living room Elayne sighed deeply 'he suspects something' Elayne said.

Becka frowned 'who does?'

'Evan, he is making the connection between me and my mother, we both quit the swim team so suddenly despite our talentâ€¦this isn't good' Elayne replied.

'It was inevitable though' said a voice and they turned to see Charlotte coming down the stairs 'sorry to interrupt you girls, but I couldn't help but overhear.'

'It's ok' replied Becka 'but what are we going to do, enough people know about us as it is.'

Charlotte nodded 'trueâ€¦but right now all Evan knows is that both Elayne and Emma quit the swim teamâ€¦he can't link that to you being mermaidsâ€¦not yet anyway.'

The front door flew open and Kayla burst in, making them jump 'you guys are never going to believe what I found, Luke did it, he found me some footage of my mom in the Dolphin Show. We got it transferred to DVD and now here it is' she said holding out the disc in its case.

Finally seeing the others gathered together she said 'what's wrong, something happen?'

Kayla was filled in on everything and when they finished she sighed and shrugged 'I agree with Charlotte, it is awkward but it was bound to happen sooner or later. What matters though is he doesn't know anymore than that.'

'Do you think he is trustworthy, if we have to tell him' Becka asked curiously.

'We'll worry about that when it comes to it' Charlotte replied.

Kayla held up the DVD 'so umâ€¦for now can we take a look at this, I've been dying to see it.'

'I have to admit I'm quite curious myself' said Charlotte 'how did she manage an occupation like that without exposing herself.'

Kayla put the DVD in and pressed play as they all gathered around to watch, they recognised the Dolphin Cove area where the show took place, the numbers in one corner of the screen told them this must have taken place about 2 years after Cleo graduated.

'Ladies and Gentlemen, boy and girls, welcome to Dolphin Cove' yelled out one of the dolphin trainers standing at the far side of the pools with the dolphins.

The crowds were screaming and cheering and other dolphin trainers did the usual stunt of riding in on dolphins and coming to join the main trainer.

'Where is my mom' Kayla frowned thoughtfully.

'Be patient' Roxie said 'she's probably coming.'

'Now I want you to all put your hands together for the star of our show and her dolphin friends, Cleo Sertori!'

Cleo came onto the screen; she stood near the stands, away from the water, waving to the audience 'hello everyone and welcome, Ronny and the other dolphins have many exciting tricks to show today, so prepare your cameras.'

What took place next over the following 30 minutes or so was hard to describe but Charlotte saw the true amazing factor of it, to normal human eyes what she was doing would seem very strange.

After about fifteen minutes of watching Cleo signals the dolphins to do stunts and pick up the other trainers to ride them about Roxie frowned 'I don't get it, what is so special, it looks like any ordinary show?'

'Yeah' said Kayla sounding disappointed, 'how is my mom so amazing?'

Charlotte smiled 'Cleo isn't even looking at the water, she isn't even crouching low to communicate with the dolphins, from where she

is standing they all understand her signals utterly and completely.'

Becka frowned 'how though?'

'She must spend time with them secretly, in the water I mean' Elayne said 'don't you think?'

Charlotte nodded 'yes, I think so.'

Roxie frowned 'isn't that kind of cheating?'

'Hey' Kayla said frowning 'she is not cheating.'

'I don't think so either' replied Charlotte 'she is using her natural affinity for the sea as a mermaid, there is nothing wrong with that.'

A beep from Roxie's phone drew her attention, she pulled it out and looked at it 'oh great' she looked at Becka 'Sophie wants us.'

'Then we should go' Becka said 'we've angered her enough recently.'

'What happened with Sophie' Charlotte asked, sounding concerned.

Elayne sighed 'I'll fill you in; you guys should go see what she wants.'

Roxie and Becka were prepared for the worst as they approached their house and walked up the driveway. They opened the door and walked inside 'hello' Roxie asked uncertainly 'Sophie?'

'Girls, there you are, I wanted you to come home so we could have dinner together and talk about things' Sophie replied, she was standing near the dinner table laying things out 'could you help me get dinner ready?'

Roxie frowned 'um...what?'

Giving her sister a shove Becka said 'yeah sure, we'll help.'

Sophie smiled 'excellent, I'll be back in a moment' she headed into her office.

While the two girls chopped up some vegetables Roxie whispered 'ok...what is up with her...she hasn't been this nice since we were kids.'

Becka shrugged 'maybe she's just trying to meet us halfway.'

'Doesn't sound like something she'd do' Roxie replied 'just last night she was yelling at me and now...something's not right.'

Becka just shrugged 'least we can do is hear her out.'

Sophie came back in 'so how was your day girls?'

Again weird, she had never asked or seemed to care much about stuff like that Roxie blinked away her surprise and said 'umâ€¦fine, boring but fine.'

'Kayla discovered that Cleo used to be a really great dolphin trainer' Becka added 'at the Marine Park.'

Sophie frowned 'oh yeah, I forgot all about that, well to be honest I only knew the two girls through my brother and Bellaâ€¦but it did make the papers.'

'How come you never told us about that' Becka asked frowning.

Sophie shrugged 'I just forgot I guessâ€¦between raising you both andâ€¦everything else.'

'Ok so why the sudden urge to have dinner together' Roxie asked 'we haven't had a family dinner inâ€¦ages.'

Sophie sighed 'well firstly I wanted to apologise for yesterday and secondly I guess I have been rather hard on you girlsâ€¦now that you are older I don't see the harm in you spending time with Charlotte and the others.'

Roxie raised an eyebrow 'now you say thisâ€¦after years of keeping us apartâ€¦how about an explanation.'

Sophie sighed 'I just was doing what I thought was right, in accordance with your parents last wishesâ€¦maybe I misunderstoodâ€¦can we try and make things right?'

The two girls looked at each other uncertainly; Roxie had a frown on her face and was clearly trying to figure out what was going on, Becka on the other hand merely moved her eyes between her sister and Sophie, her face blank.

'Yeah I guess' Roxie said at last and gave Sophie a reluctant hug that seemed a little tense for both of them.

Becka just nodded in agreement, Sophie clearly didn't seem to think a hug was necessary with her as the two of them weren't as hostile towards each other, instead Sophie turned to the table and continued preparing it.

When the three of them sat down to dinner it was awkward, none of them really knew what to say.

Finally breaking the silence Sophie said 'I was thinking, perhaps we should arrange a time to all get together with Charlotte and the girlsâ€¦put these things behind us you know, perhaps for a barbeque or something.'

Roxie didn't say anything, she just picked at her food and continued to look at Sophie, as if trying to figure out why she was suddenly acting this way.

'Yeah I guess' Becka replied 'I mean, if they are ok with it of course.'

As they ate Roxie was still thinking to herself about things 'Sophie,

I want to know' she paused'uncertain if she should go there again 'I want to know what was in that letter'about me and Becca.'

Sophie frowned for a second then her eyes lit up with understanding 'oh that letter'well it's kind of a long story.'

'We got time' Becca said simply.

10. Chapter 10

Chapter 10: Sea Change

(16 Years Earlier)

Cleo, Bella, Emma and Rikki met up on the empty beach of Mako Island.

'All right, so why are we here again' Rikki said irritably 'we could have met up anywhere, why Mako?'

'We agreed Mako Island would be safer' Emma replied 'no one was going to overhear us.'

'Correction, you agreed that' replied Rikki 'can we just get this over with please, I have both Roxie and Zane to deal with nowadays.'

Bella smiled 'someone isn't handling motherhood so well.'

'We're all stressed' Cleo said sighing, trying to sound calm 'but the kids are why we're here, we want to be sure they're in good hands if anything happens to us.'

Rikki snorted 'like what?'

'It doesn't hurt to be prepared Rikki' Cleo replied.

'Wow you sound way too much like Lewis nowadays'it's creepy' said Rikki.

Sighing Bella pushed her hair out of face 'guys, let's just get to the point.'

'Bella's right' Emma said 'we all know the plan'so now it's all down to the vote.'

They all looked round at each other in silence for a few moments, finally Rikki said 'well I'm still against it, telling people our secret has never been safe and never will be.'

'Max knows what we are' Cleo argued.

'I'm not talking about Max' Rikki argued 'I'm talking about including your step- mom Sam in this'that whole incident with her, Ryan and Sophie almost ended in a catastrophe.'

Cleo stepped forward 'Sam had nothing to do with that, she wanted Ryan to go back to his usual work, not waste time out here at

Mako.'

'It's still too risky' Rikki argued 'we should tell someone else.'

'Like who' asked Emma curiously, though her voice had a touch of that patronizing tone.

Unable to think of a reply Rikki shrugged 'I don't know...but Zane and I are against this plan.'

'Well Lewis and I think it'll work' Cleo replied.

'Sorry Rikki but I'm with Cleo on this one' Emma said, standing next to Cleo.

'You don't even have a husband, you only have one vote' Rikki argued.

Emma stepped forward but the other two stepped between them 'hey easy' Bella said 'come on guys.'

'Emma's vote counts for two' Cleo said 'her and Elayneâ€|that is what this all about after allâ€|our kidsâ€|right?'

After a pause Rikki nodded 'yeahâ€|sorry.'

'It's ok' Emma replied, turning to Bella she said 'so Bellaâ€|what's your vote?'

Bella moved over to stand next to Cleo and Emma 'me and Will agree that this is bestâ€|sorry Rikki.'

Sighing, Rikki crossed her arms over her chest 'alrightâ€|I guess I'm outvotedâ€|but if anything goes wrong don't say I didn't tell you so.'

The four girls headed back for the water, jumping into the waves one by one.

Cleo led the way as the four of them headed up the cliff to an isolated little vista point 'I asked Sam to meet us here' Cleo said 'she shouldn't be long.'

The girls didn't have to wait long, they'd only been up there about twenty minutes when they saw Sam walking up towards them, she was alone, as Cleo asked. Ever since getting married to Don she and Sam had become fairly closeâ€|if there was anyone she felt they could trust she was sure it was Sam.

'What exactly are we going to tell her' Emma asked frowning.

'The truth of course, she needs to know' Cleo replies 'my daughter is right now at home with dad and Sam has no idea what she might grow up to become.'

Bella frowned 'butâ€|how exactly are we going to do this?'

Sighing Cleo thought as Sam got closer, they had a point, this wasn't exactly the easiest news to break to someone.

Finally coming to a stop in front of them Sam smiled 'I got your message, is something wrong girls?'

Stepping forward Cleo said 'we've been thinking about the future to make sure our kids are ok if anything happens to us.'

'What makes you think anything will happen' Sam said with a smile.

'It's just a precaution' Emma explained 'we don't really think we'll need it.'

Sam nodded 'alright, what do you need from me?'

The girls looked at each other nervously and Cleo scratched her neck 'well there is something you don't know about me about us something only some people know and you can't tell anyone.'

'Ok, should I be concerned?'

'We're doing this for our kids' Bella added 'one day they might be like us they'll need someone to explain it all to them.'

'And you want that someone to be me' Sam asked frowning 'well what are we talking about here?'

'Well you know how I am around water' Cleo said 'there's a reason for that don't freak out but we're mermaids.'

Sam looked at us blinking then smiled and started laughing 'good one, mermaids that's funny ah, seriously though what is the problem.'

Rikki rolled her eyes; she reached into Bella's bag and grabbed a bottle of water. She unscrewed the top, hurled it over Cleo making her cry out in surprise.

'Rikki' Bella and Emma yelled simultaneously.

'Someone had to do something' Rikki replied casually.

Cleo transformed before Sam's eyes and fell backwards; the others barely caught her in time.

Sam stared wide eyed 'I but what how.'

'That's a long story' Cleo said 'it happened long before we met before dad divorced even it's all to do with Mako Island.'

'Cleo' Rikki frowned, shaking her head.

'No, she needs to know' Cleo insisted.

Rikki shook her disapprovingly and began drying Cleo 'we turn when we get wet and turn back when dry' she explained.

'So that's why you've been funny around water' Sam said, nodding 'you said some others knewâ€|who?'

'Lewis, Will and Zane' Bella replied 'also this man calledâ€|what's his name again?'

'Max Hamilton' Cleo replied 'he is part of this tooâ€|you and him both play a part in what we want to do.'

'How do you want Max to help anyway' Emma asked Cleo 'you still haven't explained.'

'Max created the three necklacesâ€|we want him to keep ours safeâ€|for the girlsâ€|until they are old enough. Also we want him to create a fourth necklace for Becka.'

Bella smiled 'aw, Cleo, that's sweet, thank you.'

'If he can of courseâ€|he's getting quite oldâ€|but last time Lewis saw him he said he was still quite fit and healthy for his age' Cleo added, finally turning back to normal.

Later that day Sam and the girls were standing outside Max's hut near the beach and Cleo knocked on the door 'Max, you there?'

There was silence inside for several moments and then Max opened the door 'Cleo, girls, well this is a pleasant surprise, what can I do for you' he asked as he stepped out of the house and into the open air. Cleo felt sad as she looked at him, he really was getting old, he still seemed fairly healthyâ€|but age was getting the better of him.

'Did Lewis speak to you' she asked curiously 'about our general plan?'

Max nodded sighing 'I'm going to try my best, but I made those necklaces a long time agoâ€|I'm not even sure I can remember how I did it.'

'This is the last thing we need from you' Emma said 'we won't ever ask anything from you again.'

Max laughed 'you know that's not it, I'm on your side, Gracie and the others may be goneâ€|but I'll always hold the memories of the secretâ€|in here' he said pointing to his head 'and in here' he pointed to his heart.

'Even so' Bella replied 'I feel guilty burdening you with something like thisâ€|guys we can't leave him with the lockets, even once he's built one for Becka.'

'I agree' Rikki replied 'we should find somewhere else to keep them, no offence Max.'

'None taken' Max replied smiling 'I'll get the locket built, I promised you girls that muchâ€|but you're on your own after that, I think it's time I put this past behind meâ€|the secret will be safe with me thoughâ€|don't worry.'

The girls left with Sam following behind them, she been awfully quiet

ever since they had spoken earlier.

'Sam, are you alright' Cleo asked frowning.

She nodded at Cleo 'yeah, I'm just taking it all in, thinking about all the times you acted strangelyâ€|it makes so much sense now.'

'You can't tell anyone, not dad, not Kimâ€|not anyone' Cleo replied 'please Samâ€|three times now we've had people who either tried to expose us or risked our exposure. First was a marine biologist, then this girl called Charlotteâ€|and then Ryan and Sophie almost caused a disaster on Mako.'

Sam looked at her 'Ryan, as in the one who works with me?'

'Yes' Rikki said angrily 'he wrecked our home.'

Bella stepped forward as well 'there will always be people like them, always be people trying to expose usâ€|we need to know our kids will have someone.'

Sam nodded 'you're right, so what do you want me to do?'

11. Chapter 11

Chapter 11: Treasure Hunting

(Present day)

As Roxie and Becka finished eating Sophie finished telling the story of what was in the letter; of how, 16 years ago, their parents had planned to entrust Sam with the knowledge of the mermaid secret. Also they had gone to an old man called Max, who knew of the secret, and had him create a fourth locket for Becka.

'Is Max still alive today, maybe we could go talk to him' Becka asked curiously.

Sophie shook her head 'he's gone, he died a couple of years ago, I tried to ask him about the lockets and where the girls might have hidden themâ€|but he was as stubborn as meâ€|he said nothing.'

Roxie frowned thoughtfully into her empty plate 'so Sam was the person you were meant to send us too?'

Sophie nodded 'I saw no point for numerous reasons; firstly Sam was only to be contacted if no one else knew of the mermaid secretâ€|I did and Charlotte did.'

'That still wasn't what my mother asked you to do' Roxie said angrily 'you should have sent us to her, where is she anyway, I thought she was married to Don Sertori?'

'She is, technically, but she works a lot and so is away from home for long periods at a time' Sophie replied.

'One of the lockets has been found' Becka said 'Cleo's locket was in her house and Kayla has it now.'

Looking at Becka, Sophie said 'really, interesting, I wonder what it was doing there, the letter said the girls were going to hide their lockets.'

'Her sister Kim had it, she didn't say where she got it' Becka added but she was cut off by Roxie kicking her under the table.

As the three of them got up and began cleaning the table Roxie leaned closer to her sister 'I'm going to call Kayla, you keep Sophie busy.'

Roxie swiftly moved up the stairs when Sophie wasn't watching, somehow Becka got the feeling Sophie had seen her go but she doubted she knew why, Sophie may have eyes like a hawk but she wasn't psychic.

'So what do you think, barbeque' Sophie said casually 'with charlotte and the girls?'

Becka shrugged as she carefully put away the dishes, making sure they were dry when she touched them.

'I think it would be a good idea, try and make a fresh start, well me and Charlotte need to anyway, I realize you and the girls are closeâ€|so for your sake we should try to get along' Sophie replied smiling at her as she washed the dishes.

Becka smiled, she liked the sound of that, perhaps things were looking up.

As Becka entered her room she heard Roxie getting off the phone with Kayla, saying 'alright, sounds good, see you tomorrow.'

Roxie turned to her 'hey, feel like going treasure hunting tomorrow?'

Frowning Becka sat down on the bed 'treasure hunting?'

'Yeah, we're going to go looking for the other lockets' Roxie replied 'it's time we found them.'

The next day Roxie and Becka met up with Kayla and Elayne not far from the Juice Boost 'hey guys, ready to get started' Roxie asked curiously.

Elayne smiled 'we're way ahead of you, we already did a little fishingâ€|no pun intended.'

Rolling her eyes Roxie sighed 'what did you find out?'

'Nothing unfortunately, we were hoping Sam might know something, we tried calling herâ€|but she knew nothing about it' Kayla replied, fiddling with her locket.

Elayne nodded 'so far as we can tell, our parents are the only ones who know where the lockets were hidden.'

'And obviously we can't ask them' Roxie said nodding in frustration.

There was a beep from Becka's phone and she took it out, looking at it 'it's Sophie; she says the plan is on for this afternoon.'

'What plan' frowned Elayne.

Roxie shook her head 'she wants us all to have some sort of barbequeâ€¦apologise for the way she's been behaving to Charlotte over the years I guess.'

Kayla and Elayne frowned at each other in confusion 'yeah we don't get it either' Becka added shrugging.

'I don't like it' Elayne said 'a person like Sophie doesn't just turn around and change like that.'

'We'll worry about it later' Kayla replied 'right now let's look into the lockets.'

Elayne laughed 'how exactly, I want to find them too but we don't even have somewhere to start.'

They were all silent for a moment as they thought 'what about their homes' Becka suggested 'where theyâ€¦we lived, before the accident.'

'Those homes will have other people living in them now, the furniture in them and all the stuff would have beenâ€¦auctioned off or something' Elayne replied.

They all looked at each other wide eyed 'auctionsâ€¦you don't think' Roxie said quietly.

'So what now' Kayla asked frowning, unsure.

'You and me are going to do some research about auctions that took place a while after the accident' Elayne said to Kayla turning to Roxie she added 'why don't you guys check out Mako, maybe they left them there.'

Becka snorted 'that would be way too obvious, if I were my mum I'd never do that.'

'Ok' said Roxie turning to her sister 'if you were herâ€¦where would you hide it?'

At first Becka thought she was joking so she didn't answer 'no seriously' Roxie added 'think about this guys, I know we aren't our parents but Cleo's was in her houseâ€¦that would be the last place I'd lookâ€¦if you were them, where would you put them?'

'My mum didn't mean to leave hers in the house' Kayla replied 'Kim told me so, it was Kim's fault for stealing itâ€¦that is why it stayed thereâ€¦if she hadn't it would have been hidden like the others.'

Elayne sighed 'still, Roxie and Becka might be onto something, if I was my motherâ€¦I wouldn't put it anywhere that associates it with water or Mako.'

'Why not' Kayla replied.

'Because that is how they found them originallyâ€¦kind ofâ€¦that is what Charlotte said' Elayne explained 'I'd put mine somewhereâ€¦safe.'

(16 Years Ago)

Emma walked down the long marble hallway of the bank, with a guard beside her 'you sure you want to do this' Lewis asked from behind her 'we can find somewhere else?'

'No, this place will keep it safeâ€¦until she needs it' Emma replied.

Lewis sighed shaking his head 'but a safety deposit boxâ€¦it's so modern ageâ€¦what if this place gets robbed or something Emma, we should rely on magic to protect it.'

'That is precisely why we should use thisâ€¦because it is normalâ€¦no one will look here' Emma replied, looking down at the locket in her hands.

Rikki walked along the beach of Mako, Zane struggled out of the zodiac behind her and ran along to catch up with her 'Rikki, think logically, this isn't the best placeâ€¦you have to know that!'

Rikki glared at him 'the others might be hiding theirs in stupid locations' she looked up at the island 'but I have always trusted this place, we have a connection.'

'It's ridiculous, you talk like this place is alive' Zane replied shaking his head 'I can accept its magical but there is a difference.'

She ignored him, she didn't want to fight with him and she knew that is where it would lead if they kept it up 'come on, I don't want to leave Roxie alone with my dad too long.'

Zane gave a small laugh 'he's a good guy, raised you didn't he?'

'I had a mother in the early days though' she lowered her head, she hadn't thought about her mother in years 'don't you dare make me live that life.'

'Hey' Zane said stopping 'I married you because I love you, we might argueâ€¦but I'd never leave you and Roxie.'

They briefly kissed and then parted 'I won't be long' Rikki replied as she headed up towards the mountain.

Bella sat in the boathouse, looking at the locket in her hands and then around at the old equipment; the house had once been filled with so many interesting things; shells and diving gear of Will's but now they had a garage for all that, as part of their fairly small house. She missed this old boathouseâ€¦she had many fond memories here, some of which made her blush deeply.

Getting up she looked around, was this really the right place to hide the locketâ€¦someone could easily come along and find it. She stepped

out of the house and looked out over the waterâ€|perhaps she could put it in the waterâ€|but contain it somehow, stop it from drifting away. Heading back into the boathouse she found an old chest about the size of a football and looked inside; it was empty save for some old lining.

She sealed her locket inside the black container and then placed that inside the chest, locking it and sealing it tightly 'I hope this works.'

Diving into the water she hid the chest underneath the boathouse in the far corner then sped off.

Swearing to herself Cleo shuffled around her room, opening drawers and wardrobes 'where the hell is it' she said angrily to herself. The locket was gone, she couldn't find it anywhere; she had searched all over her room for the past few hours and it just wasn't there, her face was red with exhaustion.

Her mobile rang and she put it to her ear 'hello?'

'Hey Cleo' it was Emma 'you ok, you sound exhausted?'

'I uhâ€|it's nothing' Cleo said _god why couldn't she just tell her friend what was wrong, this was serious _'everything go ok?'

'Yeah, Lewis says he'll go get changed and then pick you up from your dad's place, will that work for you' Emma asked.

'Changed for what' Cleo asked frowning, had she forgotten something.

'The reunion of course, it's tonight, we'll get to see all sorts of faces again' Emma replied laughing 'oh hang on a secondâ€|Rikki and Bella just said everything is done.'

'Rightâ€|reunion, yeah tell Lewis to come pick me up I guess' Cleo replied vaguely, hopefully she could find the locket before thenâ€|and deal with it tomorrow or something.

(Present Day)

The girls decided to split up to look into the lockets; Elayne would go and research auctions, Kayla would go out to Mako, both Roxie and Becka would investigate the houses and see if families like the Gilberts knew anything.

As Roxie and Becka walked along the street Becka began to write a list on a notepad 'soâ€|what families could we ask?'

'Well let's seeâ€|we could ask Mr Chadwick or Harrison Bennett, they're both still around. The Gilberts are also a possibilityâ€|but apart from Sophie there is no family from your side' Roxie replied thoughtfully.

Becka wrote them down 'do you think it's worth talking to the Sertori's?'

'Nah, we have heard all they have to tell us I think, plus we have Cleo's locket.'

Closing the notebook Becka said 'so where too first?'

Roxie smiled 'I think we should pay Harrison a visit, haven't seen him in years.'

'Isn't he some greedy, wealthy businessman' Becka replied putting on a look of distaste.

'I don't know to be honest, always seemed like one, but Sophie says that Zane said he used to be a lot worse.'

The two girls approached the large fancy looking building that was the Bennett house 'well he still has a nice place' Becka said casually as they went up the front steps.

Ringling the front doorbell they waited several moments before the door opened and Harrison stood there; he looked tired and rugged, wearing a loose shirt and baggy trousers. He looked nothing like the man you see on TV that was for sure. He was holding a glass of what looked like alcohol in his hand 'can I help you?'

'Hello Harrison, whatâ€¦|you don't recognise me' Roxie asked smiling at him.

He stared at her for a long momentâ€¦|squinting 'you look a lot like that Rikki daughter in law on mineâ€¦|but she's dead, like my son' god the pain in his voiceâ€¦|that was heart breaking.

'Well without being too subtle I'm your granddaughter' Roxie replied stiffly.

Again he squinted at her, taking a sip of his drink 'Roxie?'

Roxie nodded and Harrison continued 'I haven't seen you in years, what do you want?'

'Could we come in a moment' Becka asked 'it would be easier to talk inside.'

Opening the door Harrison stepped aside, letting them in 'so, I suppose you're uhâ€¦|what's her names daughter' he said gesturing at Becka.

'Bella' Becka replied 'yeah that's right.'

They looked around the house as they went inâ€¦|it had doubtless once been quite a nice placeâ€¦|but it seemedâ€¦|empty and it had so much stuff scattered around; it was a house too large for a single man, everything in it was merely reminders of better days.

'You live alone' Roxie asked, concern in her voice.

'Since my wife left meâ€¦|yes' Harrison replied bitterly, closing the door behind them 'first my son and daughter in law dieâ€¦|then my wife leaves meâ€¦|you're my only living relative now' he said it with a laugh as if he found it semi amusing.

The two girls looked at each other, concerned, Harrison's drunk behaviour was worrying 'we came here because we're asking around

about something' Becka said, trying to steer the conversation away from the sad tragedies in the past.

'My parents didn't leave anything behind did they' Roxie asked 'any keep sakes, any lettersâ€|anything they asked to hand on to me?'

Harrison shook his head 'no, Zane didn't involve me much when it concerned youâ€|he wanted to be a good father in his own way. I've lost everything girlsâ€|I don't have anything that can help youâ€|just be thankful I'm keeping your secret.'

The two looked at him in shock 'how do you know about that?'

'I discovered about the girls a long time agoâ€|I'm not stupid, it would only be logical you would carry their genes' Harrison replied 'relax, I'm not going to tell anyone.'

The two of them left the Bennett house feeling surprised 'jeez, did anyone not learn our secret' Roxie said, shaking our head.

'So who's next' Becka asked 'Mr Chadwick or the Gilberts?'

As they walked they thought about it 'let's try the Gilberts' Roxie replied at last.

The Gilberts lived where they had always lived, at least Emma's parents did, Eliot of course was of by himself now.

Lisa and Neil were as welcoming as ever 'so where is that granddaughter of ours' Neil asked as they all settled into the lounge room.

'She'sâ€|just doing some researchâ€|we all areâ€| kind of' Roxie replied 'we're asking around if the girls, Emma in your case, left anything in your possession, like a letter or keep sake?'

Neil and Lisa looked sad at Emma's name but Neil sighed and said 'it's funny you mention that actually, because Emma left two things hereâ€|one of them was meant for Elayne and the other was for Ash.'

'For Ash' Becka said 'he's with us, we could give it to him.'

Getting up Neil headed off somewhere into the house leaving the girls with Lisa.

'It's been so hard you knowâ€|since we lost Emma' Lisa said 'but at least we still have Elayneâ€|she looks more and more like her all the timeâ€|it's both amazing and difficult for us.'

Suddenly Roxie's phone rang and she excused herself to go talk in the hall.

'I've heard a lot of great things about Emma' Becka said sympathetically 'she must have been a really great young woman.'

Lisa nodded, tears in her eyes, 'yeah, she was.'

'We just came from seeing Mr Bennettâ€|he really is a mess' Becka added.

'I'm worried about him' Lisa replied 'we hardly ever hear from him anymoreâ€|everything has gone downhill for him. You know when I was a teenager I saved him from drowningâ€|and then when Emma was 16â€|she saved Zane from drowning tooâ€|it's funny how life is sometimes isn't it?'

Becka nodded, yeah it really was, it's like fate just makes things repeat over and over.

Just then Roxie came back into the room 'sorry about that' turning to Becka she added 'that was Kayla, she's had some success.'

Neil returned and handed the girls a letter and slightly larger envelope with something a little heavier insideâ€|a box maybe?

'Thank you so much for this' Becka replied.

'Yes really, thanks so much' Roxie added 'why don't you all come to our barbeque later?'

Lisa smiled 'we'd love to, we'll call Eliot and see if he can come too, no promises of course but we'll definitely be there.'

Once they left the house they looked inside the letter but left the envelope, that was for Ash, the letter contained a one of those key card keys used in safety deposit boxes at banks. Along with the letter was a note:

"_Dear Elayne: I hope I will still be alive and well and will hand this to you myself one day. However if something unforeseen should happen to me I have left something of great importance in a safety deposit box in a bank in Brisbane. Never lose this item and never take it off, you and the other girls will all have one and they are a symbol of your unity as mermaids. I have always loved you and always will, never forget that."_

_Emma _

P.S There is a message for Ash at my parents, if you ever meet him again please get it to him.

'Well it is obviously the locket' Roxie replied simply 'that much is obvious.'

Becka nodded 'we should give this to Elayne though, this is for her to do, not us.'

Roxie agreed and they headed home.

When they got there they saw Kayla and Elayne waiting out front, sitting on the front lawn.

'Hey guys, any luck so far' Elayne asked curiously.

'Yep we know where yours is' Becka replied handing Elayne the letter

and envelope 'there is also a message there for Ash, both of them were being held by Neil and Lisa.'

'And look what I found' Kayla replied holding out the locket with the ruby stone 'it was on Mako Island' she handed it over to Roxie 'all yours.'

Roxie was speechless 'Iâ€|thank youâ€|where was it?'

'Well hidden' Kayla replied 'in the caveâ€|took a lot of searching.'

'So that's three down, one to go' Becka said 'I wonder where mine was hidden.'

Elayne was reading the note that had been left for her and her eyes were getting watery 'hey, are you ok' Kayla asked her.

'Yeah I'm fine' Elayne replied sniffing 'soâ€|it's in Brisbaneâ€|in a bankâ€|clever, I wouldn't have thought to look there.'

'Did you find anything in auctions by the way' Roxie asked but Elayne shook her head.

'No, there was nothing thereâ€|I don't think any of them got takenâ€|the last one is still out thereâ€|somewhere.'

The sky was beginning to fade into that afternoon glow, they were out of time for todayâ€|but they'd made a lot of progress for one day.

'I want to see what is on this' Elayne said holding up the envelope for Ash.

'Is Ash home right now' Kayla asked as they headed into the house.

Shrugging Elayne looked around the house 'Ash?'

Both Charlotte and Ash came in from the backyard 'what's up' he asked 'we're just setting up the backyard?'

'We found something for you, from Emma' Becka said 'it was with her parents...it's a message.'

Sounding shocked Ash rushed in 'whatâ€|a message, what kind of message?'

'We don't know' Elayne replied, she handed him the envelope and he opened it. A small box holding a DVD fell out.

'It's a video message' Elayne said sounding both shocked and excited.

Ash crouched down and inserted it into the player then pressed play, the others all heard Charlotte move in behind them to watch as well.

The screen lit up to show Emma, she looked fairly old compared to pictures the girls had seen but how old exactly was hard to say,

needless to say she was certainly a young woman now and not a teenager.

She stood far enough back from the camera to show her down to about the waist, she wasn't pregnant so it was either filmed before or after Elayne was born.

'_Lewis is it on, okâ€¦good'_ Emma was saying _'Ash I hope this message reaches you one day, because there isn't a day that goes by I don't regret our break upâ€¦a lot has changed in my life so I had to grow up real fastâ€¦I got pregnant can you believe thatâ€¦I have a kidâ€¦her name is Elayne.'_

_Ok so that answers when it was filmed _Elayne thought to herself but then she was born before the other girlsâ€¦just.

'_I'm recording this because I want you to know thatâ€¦the father wasâ€¦ I can't even explain itâ€¦ he was no one importantâ€¦haven't you ever done something impulsive. But that doesn't change the fact I love Elayne more than life itselfâ€¦and if you ever meet herâ€¦I want you to know that as far as I'm concerned you're her fatherâ€¦because you're the man I loved. I don't want to burden you but that is how I feel and I hope you can understand. Hopefully I will have no need for this message and I'll see you again myselfâ€¦I guess we'll see.'_

Elayne could feel Ash looking at herâ€¦it was a strong look; she wasn't sure what to make of it.

'Ash, are you alright' Charlotte asked him finally.

Ash nodded 'yeah, I just need a little time aloneâ€¦I'll talk to you all later ok.'

Going upstairs Elayne found Ash in his room, looking out the window 'Ashâ€¦are you ok?'

'I don't know if I can do it Elayneâ€¦I wish I could butâ€¦looking at you is just so hard for me' he said.

'Because I look like my mother?'

He nodded 'I'm sorryâ€¦just give me some time to think about it ok.'

Elayne silently turned and headed back downstairs, the others were waiting for her at the bottom.

End
file.